Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/womenofsecondemp0000alic

Dear Mrs Campbell
With
Mr Ken's love

Xmas 1915

WOMEN OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

WOMEN OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

CHRONICLES OF THE COURT OF NAPOLEON III, COMPILED FROM UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS

BY FRÉDÉRIC LOLIÉE

TRANSLATED BY ALICE M. IVIMY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD WHITEING

AND FIFTY-ONE PORTRAITS THREE IN PHOTOGRAVURE

LONDON : JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD
NEW YORK : JOHN LANE COMPANY MDCCCCVII

SECOND EDITION

PLYMOUTH
WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD.
PRINTERS

INTRODUCTION

THIS book has something of the interest of great tragedy, though probably with no connivance on the part of the writer. On the face of it it is only a light and lively sketch of a court, in its most fascinating aspect—the life of its women. But really it bears a significance as profound as anything to be found in history or in literature. It is philosophy and memoir, court gossip and sad stories of the fate of kings, turn and turn about. We have Compiègne and the Tuileries under Eugénie at their best and brightest, and with this greatest attainable height of human fortune, the worst effects of utter ruin in the catastrophe of Sedan.

The supreme hour of the dynasty was marked by that festival of sovereigns and of peoples, the exhibition of 1867. The Second Empire seemed to be at the summit of its power, and it invited all the other monarchies to come and dance. There has never been such another exhibition. It was big without being cumbrous; and within the ring fence of the Champ de Mars it had everything that could charm the senses and the mind. For a supplementary wonder, there was the glittering show at court of the princes and statesmen of the world. Even this was not wholly for the favoured few: the others had their share of the fun in looking on from the kerbstone. When you had left the exhibition grounds, you went into

the Champs Elysées or the Bois and saw a promenade of princely splendours that seemed to have come straight out of fairyland. In three years or so from that time the Napoleons were in captivity or in exile, and their palace was a heap of smouldering ashes.

Thus the writer of the book, without any effort on his part, has a fine background of gloom and doom for his picture of the joy of life. We know what we know as to the end of it all, so his figures, as they flit across the scene, fairy-like, between us and the sun, still carry the suggestion of social and political convulsion in every flutter of their gauzy wings. In a well-known engraving of the period the Empress of the French sits in a garden that might have been imagined by Watteau, and in the midst of the ladies of her household. Every self-respecting visitor to Paris took this picture home with him as part of the spoil of his holiday. It was a queen of romance, enthroned amid the beauties of her court—fair creatures, irresistible to this day in spite of the antiquity of their fashions as of another world, their enormous crinolines, their outrageous straw hats, their fantastic *coiffures*. The trappings have become dowdy, but nothing can take away the grace and beauty of their wearers. This book is a book of sprightly gossip and anecdote about that butterfly scene. The figures are put before us as characters and as parts of a pageant. The author seems to have known many of those he celebrates, and to have had their story both of splendour and decline at first hand or from their rivals. As he rather maliciously observes, those who are the least inclined to talk about themselves are not always equally reticent in regard to their friends. Some have talked without mercy and have coached him in scandals that might have been left in oblivion. 'Twas a mad world!

He lays no undue stress on the central figure of the picture, but deals out pretty equal measure to all. He feels that "the time has not yet come for a serious judgment on characters and events." With all this, being but human, he cannot conceal his envy of posterity. What wonderful memoirs are now being written for that spoiled child of the ages; what precious files of correspondence already lie in many a château of Europe! Much of it is no doubt devoted to the personality of the Empress. She was not exactly a woman of culture, and she knew it, but she aspired to be a woman of affairs. She was necessarily a woman of fashion, as the fount of honour in that commanding interest, not for France alone, but, through France, for all the world. What she wore one day London, Vienna, and New York would be wearing the next, and Kamchatka as soon as possible. The late Mr. Worth has given us an impressive account of his deliberations on the issue of a new costume. It was first excogitated by the great man as a sort of Minister of the Robes without portfolio, and then submitted to a council of ladies-in-waiting. When it had passed that critical ordeal it was submitted to the Empress, to be again modified according to her commands. Then it was launched experimentally by the fairest of the bevy, who took public opinion on it by a drive in the Bois or a visit to the opera. With this plebiscitary appeal in its favour, it was finally adopted by the throne and it acquired the validity of a decree.

But all this belonged to only one side of the sovereign's nature. She was at once a lover of gaiety and a devotee, and on the more serious side she fell largely under the influence of the clerical party. She grew more and more interested in politics; and the fixed belief of most Frenchmen is that the supreme decision in the matter of the fatal war was largely due to her influence. Prussia, they argue,

was a Protestant power, and the French clericals believed that the moment had come to deal it a fatal blow. The victim, we know, was more than willing to have them try, and so the rupture became inevitable. The memoirs of Busch are quite explicit on this point; and the Empress may well be exonerated, seeing that Bismarck, on his own confession to that writer, deliberately provoked the war by the trick of the doctored telegram from Ems. The probabilities as well as the evidence support this view. As a mere hypothesis it might explain away the seeming fatuity of France in forcing a quarrel after she had received what everybody thought was the fullest satisfaction in the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern candidature. Something happened as it were in a night and a day; the storm cloud burst out of a sky that had just cleared. Yet too many Frenchmen still prefer to believe that Eugénie goaded the Emperor into the declaration of war at the bidding of her clerical camarilla. The declaration really came from France herself, maddened by the lying report that the King of Prussia had turned his back on her ambassador.

With all her exquisite charm of person and of manner, Eugénie was still without the supreme gift of *esprit*, and left to herself she would have failed to attract to the Tuileries the most brilliant "intellectuals" of the time. There was another cause for this in the fact that most of these, being of liberal tendencies, were unable to forgive the Empire the political crime of its origin. The arts were sufficiently accommodating, but letters were shy; and with Victor Hugo in exile as a standing protest, many writers preferred the favour of the public to the favour of the court.

This was in some measure set right by the Princess Mathilde, the cousin of the Emperor, and by a long way the most remarkable member of the imperial house. She

was a beautiful woman in her day. She had more illustrious family connexions than the Emperor himself, and she had both the ambition and the faculty for rule. One can never understand why she rejected the third Napoleon's offer of marriage, except perhaps for what may fairly be considered the all-sufficient reason, that she did not care enough for him. The alliance was projected by his mother and desired by himself, yet the Princess held out and sought wedded bliss in another quarter. She failed to find it after all, for she and her princely consort quarrelled as they quarrel in the slums. But she stood by the wife and gave her all the help in her power. The court circle was largely of her making, and she passed on her artists and men of letters to the Tuileries as occasion served. Sainte-Beuve was of the salon of the Princess until, in her imperious way, she picked a quarrel with him because he insisted on keeping good friends with the Republicans, and drove him back in wrath to his tent. Flaubert and Taine and Renan, with About and Dumas *fils* and Octave Feuillet, were of the same brilliant circle. The last especially became the chief ornament of the court of the Empress. He represented in his masterly fiction the happy blend between the romantic licence of an earlier time and the make-believe proprieties of the new one. An anonymous journalist who nicknamed him the "Musset of families" labelled him for history in a happy phrase. Alphonse Daudet was also of both salons, with M. Caro, who gave the court a tincture of philosophy. Most of these were content to pay their homage to the intellect of the Princess, but Jules de Goncourt was supposed to have opened approaches to her heart, and he had to be warned. The friendly counsellor was Alfred Stevens, the brilliant Belgian painter, who survived the Empire, but only in the end to suffer by a change of fashion, and perhaps also by

the advances of age, and to sell his works for what they would fetch to dealers of the second and third class.

The fate of the dynasty was often the fate of the courtiers as well. The Countess of Castiglione, who had been prominent in every riot, and whose charming face appears among the illustrations to these pages in a setting of the compositions of masquerade, lived to have a horror of court life and to die in a retreat that was almost perfect solitude. She was overtaken to some extent by the loss of her beauty, and by a sort of disgust due to the rise of more youthful rivals. She lacked the indomitable spirit of the Princess of Metternich, who, with far inferior resources of one kind, conquered to the last. The Princess was the very spirit of the almost shameless gaiety of the time. Her private theatricals were the despair of her rivals. In one performance she frolicked as a boy, in another as a shepherdess, and always with a charm which was the more extraordinary in its effects because it owed little or nothing to mere beauty. It was the charm of cleverness and of audacity, and of the piquant contrast between the frivolity of her pursuits and the dignity of her station as the wife of the ambassador of Austria. She was of those who always say the clever thing and never do the wise one. With her daring and want of reverence she called the greatest of the Rothschilds to his face her "domestic Jew." She led the dance in every extravagance while the ball lasted, and she was even, by deputy at least, on foot when the lights went out. The Prince of Metternich and the Chevalier Nigra were left with the Empress at the moment of her flight from the Tuileries. The very servants had deserted her after helping themselves to her loose cash, and the imperial fugitive had slipped out by a side door into a crowd in which anything might have happened if she had been recognized.

After a fashion, Metternich deserted her too, but without treason to an old friendship. He and his companion went off vaguely to "look for a cab," leaving the Empress and Madame Lebreton alone in the open street. Luckily the lady-in-waiting was able to hail a vehicle on her own account, and to drive off to the faithful American dentist, with the result we know.

The book offers additional evidence, if any were wanted, of feminine influence in affairs. While France is in no hurry to "emancipate" her women, they have often emancipated France. It was not exactly so in this instance, for they played a rather sinister part, but at any rate they were still busy with the destinies of their country for good or ill. They had lost the great traditions of an earlier time. Joan of Arc was, on one side of her saintly nature, a statesman, with a wide outlook on the political interest of her country. Agnes Sorel, her contemporary, had something of Joan's own fervour, though it is needless to say she was very different in her methods of appeal. She was a patriot to her heart's core, and she ruled her king for the good of his people. Catherine de' Medici, in spite of the St. Bartholomew, may yet pass, thanks to the labours of Balzac, into the ranks of the great misunderstood. If the Pompadour's interest in public business was not of the right sort, it is impossible to deny its validity in its own way and to its own ends. Madame Roland died for the Revolution, and knew exactly what she was about. In that land of drama, in short, women have usually had their share in the cast, and throughout French history we have ever to take their influence into account. The first Napoleon tried to regard this as superfluous, in spite of his earliest obligations to Josephine; but she knew what she knew, and so probably did he. Perhaps he meant no more than that gratitude is a heavy

burden to a rising man. The intuition of the sex is only one of their qualities for the political part: their very readiness to believe in appearances is another, though it is generally set down to the wrong side of the account. They take things as they come, deal with them for what they seem to be worth at the moment, and for that reason often come out better in the end than those who engage in a futile search for the deeper causes. They are never to be caught looking for midday at two o'clock in the afternoon. The successful politician is usually no more than one lesson ahead of the humblest of his followers. History is most intelligible as drama, with memoir and biography for its materials. In drama on the modern scale the heroine is no less inevitable than the hero. There is no great and no small in such a progression of events; there is only a due relationship of means to ends. A letter of gossip may do more than a state paper, or, as in Scribe's play, a glass of water offered at the right moment may be decisive of the fate of nations.

The political piece, like the others, must have a plot, and in France especially it has never wanted that. The plot of a colossal drama—Sedan, or the End of an Epoch—is implicit throughout this delightful miscellany of biography and anecdote. But few of the spectators, and these mostly women, were able to foretell the last act. Napoleon III appears in these pages as a mere puppet symbol of power with others pulling the strings. He was exhausted by disease; he was ruled from his own fireside; and, according to a keen observer, he would have set fire to the four corners of Europe to win peace at home. He moved always on lines of least resistance to those about him. He dreaded and hated the war and—he yielded to circumstances in declaring it. He was so wretchedly ill that he could hardly sit his horse in the field, and he

returned from captivity only to die. He was fooled into the belief that he might recover the prestige which he had lost by Sadowa, by an alliance with the conqueror. Bismarck kept him hypnotized in that illusion until it was time to wake him with a thunder-clap. In much the same way the first Napoleon had been deceived with a promise of "negotiations" while the Russian winter gathered its forces to do the work of the sword. In the vision of his feeble successor Prussia and France together were to share the mastery of Europe. He was warned and warned again against that treacherous hope, and most urgently perhaps by Madame de Pourtalès; a woman of Prussian connexions, though of French nationality, who saw what was coming long before it passed. The Prussian minister in Paris, thinking he was sure of her, clearly foreshadowed the cession of Alsace in her presence at his own dinner table. General Ducros, the writer of the memorandum on German designs, which has passed into history, obtained the materials for it from another lady in French society, who enjoyed the confidence of both courts. The Germans believed that declining France was ready to become a second Spain, and they made no secret of it when they felt sure of their company. Their leaders were always extremely attentive to the ladies of the French court. Bismarck, when ambassador to France, tried hard to win the confidence of Madame Walewska. His master the King of Prussia was prodigal of courtesies to the Empress at Compiègne, as though to mark his sense of her consort's neglect of her, and to play the part of *galant homme* with a sympathy for unmerited misfortune. The whole aim of their policy was to lull the doomed power into the sense of security until they were ready for the stroke. Everything was foreseen; France was not only to be deprived of her frontier fortresses, but to be barred for

ever from the very sight of the Rhine. That the fortresses were in the reckoning is clear from what passed between the German ambassador and Madame de Pourtalès. Other intrigues of the same nature are said to be going on at this moment against other nations. All we can hope for in the new drama is a better balance of power—fewer stars of mere statecraft, and more supernumeraries in the shape of peoples with a part of their own. The evil of the imperial system was that the French nation had no sufficient part in the play. The influence of the star performers has waned excessively during the Second Republic, and France has now put her destiny and her interests in the nation's hands.

With such books as the one now in question, the wonder is that the general reader should ever condescend to the novel. Perhaps he does so only from a patriotic desire to support a national industry. Here he has all that the novel can ever give him in character, intrigue, incident, the sense of the crisis, with ever so much more in the shape of good, sound history. As it is, he too often leaves history severely alone. The historians have themselves to thank for it. Their consuming passion for the texts of charters—to say nothing of writs—and for the chapter and verse of Acts of Parliament and of treaties, is apt to be wholly repellent to the mass of their fellow-creatures. Most of these prefer the humanity without the document, and are dying to know just how men have lived and nothing more. For them history is but drama on a larger scale, and where it fails in that it fails in everything. In its ordinary form it quite misses its appeal to most of those who might hope to profit by its teachings. It is astonishing how little history is read nowadays, or perhaps ever has been read at any time. Macaulay saw what was wrong with it, and found the remedy in a

page that was brilliant as well as learned. But his rivals could never forgive him his success, and under their slings and arrows the study lapsed into the matter of fact of a barrister's brief. When all other ammunition was exhausted they called him a partisan, as if letters or art could be anything but a point of view. They forgot, moreover, their own readiness to accept dullness in expiation of the same fault, or the same quality, in the historians of their choice. For him history was human character in the first place, and he had to vindicate his view of it by a pathetic apology for his attention to the concerns of everyday life. His supreme vindication is that he is one of the very few historians who have reached the people at large.

The main secret of his power was that he held the memoir in proper respect, and thus made his work the quintessence of all the vital interests of a period. A Macaulay we cannot have every day or even in every age, but any enterprising publisher might give us a new universal history in a sequence of the chief memoirs of all time. Wisely edited and annotated, with Dryasdust kept in his proper place in the appendix, such a series would lead us to our knowledge of the past by mere craving. We should get our instruction through our longings, as we get our food. There would be no lack of appetizing fare in the literature of all lands. Great annalists, men and women, have gossiped through all the ages, and have illuminated every period with their fascinating "asides" on human motive and on human passions. France is especially rich in them, and this book is but one of many that might tempt even a man starving for want of a palate to the glorious feast.

RICHARD WHITEING.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE flood of Napoleonic literature which for some years past has seethed around us is now less full and strong. Or rather, its course has been slightly modified. Gradually it has been diverted from its source and now tends towards that tributary of its domain, the period of the Second Empire —a period less heroic and lurid, but which, free from the domination of one figure, one name, and one man, offers, on a less imposing background, a greater diversity of scene and more engaging personalities.

Destinies and currents are both subject to change.

In history, as in custom, fashion is fleeting. It is moved by all the winds of heaven. To-day it has drawn nearer to the scope of our memories; it has now joined that somewhat mixed cortège which, in an hour of surprises, has fallen in with the rear of the great imperial march past.

We return to it without political passion, by mere choice of subject, for curiosity's sake, or for the pleasure of following in fancy the actors and scenes of that brilliant comedy which had so tragic an ending.

In this play, women took a prominent part, the principal rôle indeed at the court receptions: those gatherings so mixed as to the moral worth concealed behind high-sounding titles and gaudy costumes, but at the same time so brilliant in appearance, so illusively gay, so attractive in colouring, that, by comparison, those of other courts

in Europe—Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, or London—seem merely to be "ministerial functions," official processions, overweighted with pomp and dullness.

Beautiful women are necessary to a court, if it is to possess the significance and attraction, superficial, no doubt, and unnecessary to the happiness of a nation, which nevertheless exercise a subtle charm when the names of Versailles or the Tuileries evoke visions of smartness and beauty.

We find amalgamations of anything but the purest elements; intruders from a gilded Bohemia, sudden invasions, noisy and incongruous, of the foreign colony, composed of Poles, Spaniards, Italians, English, and Americans, somewhat confusing our judgment of a court which called itself Imperial and French.

But at least the picture cannot be accused of monotony. From all points of the horizon a pleiad of brilliant stars had arisen. Beautiful and clever women congregated in serried ranks. Armed for conquest with beauty and seductive charm, they brought in their train that warmth of impression born of novel pleasures, and all the dash and high spirits which belong to the confidence of youth. How should the scene have been other than it was—dazzling and magical.

The women of the Second Empire! What a theme for the chronicler to develop for the lovers of history in its more frivolous aspect; to note, explain, and embellish at will the adventures which characterize the period; the secret traces of the eternal feminine ascendancy; the fugitive graces and ephemeral successes of wit or beauty; the ardours of soul and the thrill of the senses. Like a track of perfume, these women have left behind them a strange and unforgettable tradition of invincible tenderness, of daring independence, of haughty caprice or wild

dissipation, which seems a long extension of the intoxicating hours of the eighteenth century.

This tradition, with all it holds of reality—pages torn direct from the book of life—cannot be completely reconstructed without suppressions or omissions until the necessary interval of time has effaced all scruples attaching to the near past, and cleared the way for perfect independence in the future.

Nevertheless, it is right, and even urgent, that we should begin to occupy ourselves with these matters while the evidence to be drawn from personal recollections is still available. We have now reached the point where posterity may be said to begin, where those who talk and relate have seen and come in contact with the personalities now fading into darkness.

In spite of the many errors and the hasty conclusions that have been imported into the subject, there remains but little that is new or important to be learnt of the central figures in the picture—the Emperor, the Empress, and the Prince Napoleon. But hitherto we have been given only vague outlines and faint sketches of those famous beauties, the fascinating women who from behind the screen of politics, in their own salons, or at court, gave society its tone and tendency. To us it has seemed a work of deep interest to paint their portraits and restore them to their places in the social history of their time.

I confess that it has not been easy to induce them, or their intimate friends, to lend me those personal touches so necessary to a faithful portrait.

It is invariably difficult to depict the living. How much more so when it is a question of feminine personalities grown uneasy, timid, or fanciful by reason of temper, age, or fear of conventions—those terrible conventions of position, family, and society. To their taste the most extrava-

gant praise seems insipid; the shadow of criticism alarms their susceptibility; their sensitiveness is wounded by the first suspicion of one of those happy *sous-entendus*, thanks to which we may complete in thought what must not be expressed in words. . . . "Speak of us, extol our beauty, deck our altars—all this we freely permit; but for pity's sake do not speak a word of this or of that. Be interesting if you can, but do not allude to that incident; above all, do not bring in this name. . . . Be very careful not to recall such and such a meeting; there is nothing for strange eyes to see in this room, nor in this corner of the house." How hardly may truth, the whole truth, find its way to the public!

Moreover, in the imperial circle, which has survived its vanished dream, the orders are strict: to lock themselves away from prying eyes, to conceal all documents, secrete all souvenirs, to open no door or window by which these things might take wing and fly away. This enforced silence has hitherto made it very difficult to give a faithful account of the eighteen years of the reign of Napoleon III, apart from public events, and drawn from the private life of contemporary personages.

Fortunately, however, the preserving curiosity of the historian has recourse to strategy which enables him by a turning movement to carry the position that seemed invincible.

With women, even those the least given to confession, there is always the resource of hearing them talk about others. We have surmounted many difficulties by means of this natural amiability of the sex. Sometimes it is a brief, piquant story, which may be turned to good account. Or an anecdote, a characteristic trait, dropped by chance, which it were a pity not to preserve. Or again it might be a correspondence, not to be trusted out of

sight, but which we are permitted to handle and glance through. Pigeon-holes opened a little way, tiny bundles of papers carefully pinned together, thirty years ago or more, brought out from under lock and key. Little by little, grain by grain, we manage to get in our harvest.

From these remarks overheard, these conversations weighed and tested, these written documents to be compared with the spoken word, from these testimonies of living witnesses, sifted and proved with all the accuracy which so short a perspective demands, we have put together a volume, direct and faithful in detail, upon the Women of the Second Empire.

FRÉDÉRIC LOLIÉE.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

AN IMPERIAL POMPADOUR

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE

1

A brilliant dawn—A radiant youth and early marriage—Departure of the youthful Countess de Castiglione—A secret mission—Her arrival in France—A sensational appearance at the Tuileries—The Emperor's visit—Piedmontese diplomacy and feminine diplomacy—Under the roof of an Italian woman—An attempt to murder Napoleon III—The Florentine Countess in temporary exile—The incognito of the lovely recluse at Turin—Her triumphant return—Some characteristic traits—Anecdotes—Unpublished letters—What others thought of her . . . . *pages* 1–47

2

The wane of too great beauty—Madame de Castiglione withdraws from the scene—Her declining days—The last strange phase of the celebrated Florentine's existence—Anecdotes and letters—Romantic episodes—Her end—Her will—A legendary souvenir . *pages* 47–63

CHAPTER II

A BONAPARTE

MADAME DE RUTE

The most complete incarnation possible of internationalism—Madame de Rute, *née* Bonaparte—What she was and what she would have liked to be—Singular circumstances of her marriage with the Count de Solms—Great stir in the world—Madame de Solms' difficulties with the authorities—Her imperial cousin signs the decree of banishment—In Italy—Happy years—A confidential letter treating of this phase of her life—From Milan to Turin—A strange evening at Madame Solms'—She is soon to be called Madame de Rattazzi—Some details about the marriage: rumours and anecdotes—Victor Emmanuel and his minister's wife—Triumphal wedding trip—Ten years after—Her household in Paris as Madame de Rute—Originality and eccentricity—The moral attributes of this singular woman—Woman and artist . . . . *pages* 64–82

CHAPTER III

PRINCESS MATHILDE AND HER FRIENDS

Armorial bearings of Mathilde Napoleon—Her childhood—Under the trees of Arenenberg—Unpublished letters of Queen Hortense—The truth about Mathilde's feeling for Louis Napoleon—After the Strasburg affair—Mathilde recalled by her father, King Jérôme—Her suitors—She becomes Princess Demidoff—Another aspect of this wealthy alliance—Scene of violent jealousy at a ball—The Emperor of Russia signs the decree of separation—Princess Mathilde at Louis Philippe's Court—After the Revolution of 1848—Mathilde as a link under the Republic and at the beginning of the Empire—Her star at its zenith—It wanes on the advent of an Empress—Mathilde's relations with Eugénie de Montijo—Private dissensions among the Bonapartes—Her opinions opposed to the Emperor's—Family quarrels—Mathilde, raised to the dignity of Imperial Highness, opens the doors of her house still more widely—Her brilliancy—Exceptional in splendour and duration—In Paris—Her house at St. Gratien—Her hospitality—The pastimes of the Mathildian Academy—Portraits and anecdotes of some of her adherents—Nieuwerkerke—Eudore Soulié—Viel-Castel and his "black books"—The Goncourts—The Giraud dynasty; a pleasing picture of home life—Abbé-Coquereau; a prelate's manner of speech—Théophile Gautier and his conversational fireworks—Mérimée—Sainte-Beuve—Princess Julie's notebook—How Sainte-Beuve was regarded at Princess Mathilde's—Mathilde's great affection for the illustrious critic—How she dined with Sainte-Beuve—Sudden quarrel—A reconciliation *in extremis*—Other guests—Table talk—On love—Mathilde's dearest friends—One of them: Count de Nieuwerkerke again—After the war—Thirty years of artistic and social sovereignty . *pages* 83–146

CHAPTER IV

A GOLDEN-HAIRED AMBASSADRESS

COUNTESS LE HON

I

A great marriage and its consequences—A strange story and simple ending—Monsieur de Morny—Countess Le Hon—Retrospect; her arrival at the French Court as ambassadress—Her portrait—In her box at the opera—Her salon—Correspondence of Philippe, Duke of Orleans—In public and in private—A letter from Vatout—The best years of Countess Le Hon, in her house in the Champs Elysées.

pages 147–162

2

Orléanism and Bonapartism—After the Strasburg incident—A mysterious correspondence between Queen Hortense and the youthful Countess Le Hon—Some unpublished facts concerning the Princess Mathilde—Curious revelations—Under cover of an unknown sister of the Countess Le Hon's Queen Hortense betrayed her uneasiness about her unacknowledged son, Morny—Morny at "the beautiful ambassadress's" before December 2—Strange confidence—A saying of Madame Dosne's—Under the Empire—The wane of Countess Le Hon's fortunes—Her last years . . *pages* 162–176

CHAPTER V

PLEASURE'S AMBASSADRESS

PAULINE DE METTERNICH SANDOR

Two sides of one portrait—The young Countess Pauline Sandor—Her marriage with Prince Richard Metternich—Arrival in Paris—Receptions at the Austrian Embassy—Princesse de Metternich, in spite of Wagner, leads the fashion at Court and in town—Anecdotes—A great lady's passion for the theatre—At Compiègne—Fragments of original letters—Madame de Metternich's friends and enemies—Flight of epigrams—A hotter attack—Excitement in the camp of the princesses—An exciting duel—Madame de Metternich's true rôle at the Court of Napoleon—The last act of a brilliant comedy—On a new stage—Princess de Metternich's pre-eminence in Viennese society . . . . . *pages* 177–221

CHAPTER VI

THE SALONS OF A MINISTER OF STATE

COUNTESS WALEWSKA

1

Direct evidence—Reminiscences and souvenirs—At Florence—Youthful impressions—A son of Napoleon I—Tradition and history of the great man's love affairs—How Marie Anne de Ricci became Countess Walewska—Presentation at Court—A letter from Madame Adélaïde—Walewski ambassador to London—A letter from Napoleon III—At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris—A great fancy ball—Fêtes and receptions . . . . *pages* 222–241

2

Foreign guests at the Château de Compiègne—A talk with Bismarck—Visit of Frederick William to the Countess—An amusing mistake: the King of Prussia and "Leroy"—The best page in a minister's portfolio—Betwixt Emperor and Empress—After the 4th of September—Madame Walewska's salon in the Hôtel de Flandre in Brussels—A letter from Thiers—Return to France—Thirty years after. *pages* 242–258

CHAPTER VII

THE EMPRESS'S CIRCLE

Recapitulation—Stendhal's prophecy—The Montijos in Paris—Hunting parties at Fontainebleau—The Emperor makes up his mind—A little tale hitherto unknown: at the Duc de Morny's—Official announcements—Ten years of pleasure—Sketch of the Empress, physical and moral—In private life—Trivial revelations by the ladies of the palace—Eugénie's character in contrast to Clotilde's—Anecdotes—Virtues and fascinations—An incipient and sentimental flirtation—A romantic episode not generally known—How the Empress became interested in politics—She begins to intervene in the councils of state—Her growing influence—Disputes with the Emperor—High treason—The Empress's active rôle in the latter years of the reign and its consequences—Afterwards—What may be expected from future revelations . . . . *pages* 259–285

CHAPTER VIII

THE THREE SISTERS LA ROCHELAMBERT

Portrait of Madame de La Bédoyère, Princess de la Moskowa—At Court and in society—A saying of Madame de Metternich—An amusing story—Sad ending to a happy day—Countess de La Poèze—A lesson to the chroniclers of yesterday and to-day—The last morning on duty of a lady-in-waiting at the Tuileries—Madame de Valon—Exceptional importance of her salon after the war—How she "invented" Pouyer-Quertier—A social adjunct to the office of the Minister of Finance—The personal charm of Madame de Valon—The usefulness of wit, heart, and imagination to a woman of the world—The Countess de Valon's claim on posterity . *pages* 286–300

CHAPTER IX

A MARSHAL'S DAUGHTER

SOPHIE DE CASTELLANE, COUNTESS DE BEAULAINCOURT

By way of preamble—Youth of Sophie de Castellane—Wedding festivities at the Château Montgeoffroy—Eccentricities of Monsieur de Contades—A gentlemanly plate-smasher—An attempt to get into the Chamber of Deputies—Exciting election—Madame de Contades in Paris and at Court—Hunting parties—Opinions and anecdotes respecting this phase of Madame de Contades' life—Hours of sentimental melancholy—Two unpublished letters—She becomes Countess de Beaulaincourt—Widow's weeds—A new aspect of life—Madame de Beaulaincourt's salon—*Grande dame* and artificial flower-maker—Curious reminiscences—Madame de Beaulaincourt's archives.

pages 301–316

CHAPTER X

A WORLDLY LIFE

MÉLANIE DE BUSSIÈRE, COUNTESS DE POURTALÈS

A glance at the salons of the Opposition—Where to go?—An appearance at the Tuileries—Madame de Pourtalès in her seventeenth year—Festivities and fashionable events—At Compiègne—Theatricals—A *grande dame* at rehearsal—Fragments of letters from Madame de Pourtalès and Princess Metternich—More serious subjects of consideration—In Berlin—Sad forebodings—A page of history—War between Strasburg and Paris—Ducrot's letter to General Frossard—The end—Imperialist reminiscences—The salons of Madame de Pourtalès—A talk about Madame de Castiglione—Close of the sketch . . . . . *pages* 317–342

CHAPTER XI

A FORGOTTEN FEW

Brief sketches—Anna Murat, Duchesse de Mouchy—Madame de Montebello—Vicomtesse Aguado, Marquise de Las Marismas—Marshal Magnan's daughters; an *enfant terrible*—In the Empress's Blue Room—The Duchesse de Morny—Sophia de la Paniéga and the matrimonial romance of Marshal Pélissier, Duc de Malakoff—A superior soul: "Marcello" the fashionable sculptress—The confidential papers of the Duchesse de Colonna—Countess Mercy-Argenteau—A legendary beauty; splendour and great fall—Further names and souvenirs—More to follow . . *pages* 343–362

INDEX 363

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE AND HER LADIES-IN-WAITING . *Frontispiece*
Photogravure

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE . . . *To face page* 8

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE AS "SADNESS" IN A TABLEAU VIVANT . . . . ,, ,, 16

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE IN TABLEAUX VIVANTS —ARMED FOR CONQUEST . . . ,, ,, 26

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE IN TABLEAUX VIVANTS —PIOUS MEDITATION . . . . ,, ,, 28

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE DRESSED AS THE WIFE OF A DOGE . . . . . ,, ,, 34

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE IN TABLEAUX VIVANTS —DRESSED AS A NUN . . . . ,, ,, 42

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE IN HER DECLINING DAYS . . . . . ,, ,, 50

MADAME DE KORSAKOFF . . . . ,, ,, 58

MADAME DE RUTE, NÉE BONAPARTE . . ,, ,, 64

THE DUCHESS DE BASSANO, LADY-IN-WAITING TO THE EMPRESS . . . . . ,, ,, 74

LAURE DE ROTHSCHILD . . . . ,, ,, 82

PRINCESS MATHILDE . . . . ,, ,, 90

COUNT ANATOLE DEMIDOFF, PRINCE OF SAN-DONATO, AND HUSBAND OF PRINCESS MATHILDE, IN SPANISH COSTUME . . . . . ,, ,, 98

THE PRINCESS MATHILDE . . . . ,, ,, 106
From the painting by Giraud

COUNT DE NIEUWERKERKE, MASTER OF FINE ARTS . ,, ,, 116
From the painting by Dubufe

PRINCESS MATHILDE . . . . ,, ,, 124
From the bust by Carpeaux

BARON AND BARONESS P. DE BOURGOING—COUNT AND COUNTESS O. ALGUADO . . . *To face page* 132

MME. CANROBERT, WIFE OF THE FIELD-MARSHAL . ,, ,, 140

COUNTESS LE HON, WIFE OF THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR ,, ,, 148
From the painting by Dubufe

HORTENSE DE BEAUHARNAIS, DAUGHTER OF THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE, WIFE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE, KING OF HOLLAND, AND MOTHER OF NAPOLEON III . ,, ,, 156

THE DUKE DE MORNY . . . . ,, ,, 162

THE DUCHESS DE MORNY . . . . ,, ,, 170

PRINCESS PAULINE DE METTERNICH-SANDOR . . ,, ,, 180

PRINCE RICHARD DE METTERNICH, THE AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR, WITH HIS WIFE, PRINCESS PAULINE DE METTERNICH-SANDOR . . . . ,, ,, 188

COUNT SANDOR, FATHER OF THE PRINCESS DE METTERNICH, RIDING THE HORSE LION, WITH WHICH HE WON SEVERAL STEEPLECHASES . . . ,, ,, 192

LES COMMENTAIRES DE CESAR . . . ,, ,, 202

PRINCESS DE METTERNICH IN 1905 . . . ,, ,, 216

ANNE-MARIE DE RICCI, COUNTESS WALEWSKA . ,, ,, 222

COUNT COLONNA WALEWSKI, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN LONDON . . . . . ,, ,, 228

PRINCESS LISE TROUBETSKOÏ, SISTER OF THE DUCHESS DE MORNY . . . . . ,, ,, 234
From the painting by Winterhalter

BARON HAUSSMANN AND HIS DAUGHTER VALENTINE (MADAME PERNETTI) . . . . ,, ,, 240

THE DUCHESS MARIE DE CADORE . . . ,, ,, 246

MADAME DE PASKÉWITCH . . . . ,, ,, 256

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE . . . . ,, ,, 262

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE . . . . ,, ,, 264
From the collection of A. M. Broadley, Esq.

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE . . . . ,, ,, 268
From a portrait by Winterhalter

PACCA DE MONTIJO, DUCHESS D'ALBE . . ,, ,, 274

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE . . . . ,, ,, 280

THE PRINCESS OF WALES (QUEEN ALEXANDRA) . ,, ,, 284

THE MARCHIONESS LA BÉDOYÈRE, DUCHESS DE LA MOSKOVA . . . . . *To face page* 288

SOPHIE DE CASTELLANE, COUNTESS DE BEAULAINCOURT ,, ,, 302

THE DUKE OF HAMILTON'S DAUGHTER . . ,, ,, 312

MÉLANIE DE BUSSIÈRE, COUNTESS DE POURTALÈS, AT THE TIME OF HER MARRIAGE . . . ,, ,, 320
From the painting by Winterhalter

THE MARCHIONESS DE GALLIFFET . . . ,, ,, 332

MÉLANIE DE BUSSIÈRE, COUNTESS DE POURTALÈS . ,, ,, 340
From the painting by Carolus-Duran

ANNA MURAT, DUCHESS DE MOUCHY . . ,, ,, 344

THE COUNTESS REGNARDE . . . ,, ,, 348

ADÈLE D'AFFREY, DUCHESS COLONNA DE CASTIGLIONE ,, ,, 352

MADAME DE POMEYRAC . . . . ,, ,, 356

LOUISE DE CARAMAN-CHIMAY, COUNTESS DE MERCY-ARGENTEAU, AT THE TIME OF THE MARRIAGE OF HER DAUGHTER, THE MARCHIONESS D'AVARAY . ,, ,, 360

WOMEN OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

CHAPTER I

AN IMPERIAL POMPADOUR

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE

I

A brilliant dawn—A radiant youth and early marriage—Departure of the youthful Countess de Castiglione—A secret mission—Her arrival in France—A sensational appearance at the Tuileries—The Emperor's visit—Piedmontese diplomacy and feminine diplomacy—Under the roof of an Italian woman—An attempt to murder Napoleon III—The Florentine Countess in temporary exile—The incognito of the lovely recluse at Turin—Her triumphant return—Some characteristic traits—Anecdotes—Unpublished letters—What others thought of her.

IF indeed Beauty may be regarded as the sovereign gift which, in its fullest development, should ensure to its possessor a life of sunny and unbroken harmony, then of all the seductive women of the Second Empire, Madame de Castiglione, the peerless, "the divine," might fairly have anticipated such a life, for to her admirers and rivals alike have conceded Beauty's crown.

In her last days the celebrated Countess shrouded herself in mystery, which the zeal of her latest friends enabled her to maintain. But however thick the veil that has been hung over Madame de Castiglione's portraits;

however carefully the relics of her turbulent career have been buried by the efforts of her loyal friends; however carefully the few papers which escaped the *auto-da-fé* organized by the Italian police on her decease were secreted from profane eyes, curiosity concerning her has never slept. The public were greedy to obtain light on the real personality of that friend of kings and counsellor of princes, the secret and ex-official ambassadress known as the Countess Verasis-Castiglione.

The inevitable followed: failing authentic particulars, audacious inventions were circulated about her. She has been the subject of as many false reports as of anecdotes, and no part of her life, from cradle to grave, has escaped the inventiveness of her biographers.

By the kindness of her most loyal friend, General Estancelin, we have been permitted to examine a vast number of personal relics and fragments of letters, by means of which we have been enabled to trace a truthful picture of that charming figure, hitherto, in spite of her fame, so little known and so misunderstood.

She first saw the light in 1840, according to D'Ideville, although she herself fixes the date at 1843. Her early childhood was passed in a perfectly authentic palace belonging to the Oldoïni family. The story that she was born on a small farm, and was set at a tender age to the task of looking after the cattle, owes its origin entirely to the imagination of a contemporary novelist, who happened to be in search of striking examples of sudden and dazzling changes of fortune.[1]

Virginie Oldoïni, the wife of François Verasis-Castiglione, chief secretary and first equerry to the King of Piedmont, was of good Florentine extraction. Her mother had been richly endowed by nature with grace, charm, and refinement. Her health, however, was always delicate, and the child had the misfortune to lose her too early. The

[1] Henri de Régnier, *Le Mariage de Minuit.*

Marquis Oldoïni's easy-going—I had almost said frivolous—temperament enabled him to bear the blow with equanimity. He handed over the task of educating his daughter to her grandfather, Lamporecchi, a celebrated lawyer and jurisconsult, and then as attaché to an Italian embassy pursued his irresponsible way across the face of Europe.

Whilst still under her mother's care, the child had been treated with indulgence; but with her grandfather her lightest wish was gratified, her every desire forestalled.

From her birth she seems to have been marked out for an eventful and stormy career. She was in an eminent degree one of those persons described by Saint-Simon as predestined to inspire the most extravagant of passions, and to retain their lovers and admirers even after death. At twelve she was as lovely and as tall as at twenty. Not many months after her twelfth birthday she was to be seen in her box at the Pergola, where her brilliant eyes, the fair promise of her youthful figure, her rich brown hair adorned with purple blooms, the whole rendered even more striking by the confidence of the child's bearing, made her the cynosure of all eyes in the crowded house. The fame of the rare perfection of her beauty spread quickly throughout Florence. A murmur of admiration followed her when she appeared on the Cascine.[1] She rapidly became the idol of the pagan and art-loving city.

Virginia, or Nicchia as she was called in her family, received many offers of marriage before she had attained her fifteenth year. The story of the train of events which led to her union with Count Castiglione was related to me by Madame Walewska, who played a part in them.

One winter's night in 1854, when Count Walewski was ambassador in London, and Count Azeglio the Italian minister in the same city, a reception was given by the

[1] A fashionable promenade in Florence.

Duchess of Inverness, a relative of the Queen. Amongst the guests the handsome face and carriage of a young Italian gentleman attracted a good deal of attention. This young man, the Count Castiglione, found himself in the course of the evening by the side of the ambassadors of France and Italy. A dance had just ended, and the Italian's eye roamed with evident satisfaction over the bare shoulders and arms of the beautiful women assembled there. He turned to Count Walewski—

"I do not suppose you know the real object of my visit to London. I have come to find a wife."

"If that is really the case, my dear Castiglione, you made a mistake in leaving beautiful Italy. Take my advice and go back to Florence. Get an introduction to the Marchioness Oldoïni, and, if you can win her daughter's favour, marry her. You will then be the husband of the loveliest woman in Europe."

The advice was too tempting to be neglected. The young Count followed it to the letter. He was immediately bewitched, as indeed he might well be. I have seen a pastel portrait of the radiant Florentine at the time of her marriage, now hanging in the castle of Baromesnil. What a vision it depicts! Her eyes, as blue as her robe, have a magic softness; her rich, abundant, brown hair clusters close about the pure lines of her brow; the arms and bosom have an indescribable grace in their rich curves; the dainty dimpled chin, the lovely parted lips, like an opening crimson flower, appear to invite a caress. The Count de Castiglione hastened on the marriage.

She, on her side, appears to have been far less attracted towards her lover. The Countess d'Alessandro, talking of the wedding, told me that she bore herself throughout the ceremony like an Iphigenia being led to the sacrifice.

Before the marriage she informed the Count that she had very little affection for him. He would have himself to blame, she told him, if later on their life in com-

mon proved less happy than they hoped. Had she not persistently endeavoured to dissuade him from taking a step which could not conduce to his happiness? She had tried by every means in her power to check the warmth of his feelings for her.

"I do beg you, dear Count," she said, "not to press your suit. I have neither affection nor sympathy for you, and I am convinced that I shall never be anything but wholly indifferent to you. Turn your attention elsewhere and try to care for some one else."

"Never," he replied. "If you cannot care for me, I must bear it. But at least let me have the pride of possessing as my wife the most beautiful woman of her time."

For this precious but vain satisfaction he paid the full price—a high one. A single incident which occurred in the very beginning of their married life throws a light on their relations. Custom required that the bride should pay a visit to her husband's mother immediately after the ceremony. The marriage had not been brought to a satisfactory conclusion without some little trouble, and the bride showed a marked disinclination to perform this duty. No adequate reason can be found for her refusal to comply with this custom and call on the Countess de Castiglione. Her resolution, however, could not be shaken. The Count tried every means of persuasion, but in vain. He implored, argued, commanded; he used severity, then stooped to coax. She remained unmoved, and nothing he could urge induced her to go through this simple act of courtesy. One day when they were out driving together, finding her in a softer mood than usual, the Count seized the opportunity to give the coachman his mother's address, hoping she would allow herself to be taken there. Not a word did she say until the carriage was crossing the river. Then drawing off her shoes, she flung them, in the twinkling of an eye, into the water below, saying—

"I suppose you will hardly compel me to walk into her house barefoot."

Yet very many women in her place might have loved the husband who had been allotted her. He was of good birth and only twenty-two years of age, while we know he had a handsome face. He seems, however, to have lacked strength of character, and that spirit of initiative which alone could have enabled him to give her the position for which her ambition and tastes alike fitted her. It was in vain that he established her in his luxurious palace near Turin and lavished his wealth upon her. The only return she ever made him was a forced smile, an unchanging coldness. In two years he ran through a considerable fortune—a fact which by no means tended to improve his position with his wife, who was further incensed by this evidence of her husband's incapacity and weakness. Other influences, moreover, hastened the final parting of the pair.[1]

In marrying the Count Castiglione against her personal inclination, the haughty Florentine probably promised herself not to allow her tastes and ambition to be limited by her nuptial contract. Victor Emmanuel, King of Piedmont, was the first to offer her outside distractions.

We have no ground for assuming that the sovereign possessed—as a man—attractions in any way superior to those of M. de Castiglione. We know, on the contrary, that the reverse was the case. Victor Emmanuel was singularly devoid of all distinction of manner and address. Rarely, indeed, has there been a prince so ill-fitted by

[1] Count Francis de Castiglione, finding himself left with only the remains of his fortune, sought an appointment in the King's household, and obtained it through his uncle General Cigala's influence. He won the confidence and friendship of Victor Emmanuel, and was his chief secretary when he died suddenly, from the effects of a fall from his horse. The accident occurred whilst he was in attendance on the carriage containing Prince Humbert and Princess Marguerite the day following their marriage (the afternoon of 30 May, 1867).

temperament to shine in society. At official banquets his manner was nervous and irritable, and he was manifestly ill at ease. At Court functions of every kind he was with difficulty induced to appear. He was at his best in the hunting-field, or with his army manœuvring in the field, and the only pleasures he knew were those of the senses.[1] It is related of Victor Emmanuel that on one occasion at a grand ball given in his honour in 1860, in the royal palace of Milan, at which he appeared in uniform, he leaned towards a distinguished diplomatist—the Swiss Ambassador—and as his eyes wandered round the brilliant assembly, uttered in his ear the memorable words: "Are you really enjoying this? I find it deucedly dull, and I wish it were over."

The company watching the sovereign asked themselves who was the person thus honoured with his confidence, and what could be the weighty topic that absorbed them. A better understanding between the two neighbouring nations might possibly spring from this impromptu interview. Those few words might engender schemes calculated to promote the interests of both states. So much for the conjectures of the crowd! The momentous interview was merely the momentary expansion of a monarch compelled to take part in a distasteful ceremony and finding it "deucedly dull."

In a subsequent visit to France the King of Sardinia once expressed his contempt for ceremonial with equal frankness at the Empress's Court. Napoleon III had just received a delegation of the clergy of France and listened to their solemn assurances of allegiance. The King turned to the Duc de Morny and said, "The Emperor is getting a very good reception, especially from his clergy. It was very different with me." Then swinging round on his

[1] It used to be said of him in Turin that "no monarch ever succeeded better in becoming the father of his people." He indulged his paternal instincts freely and indiscriminately.

heel he added, "Not that I care a damn" ("D'ailleurs, je m'en f——"). M. de Morny politely responded, "Nor do I." Then imitating the King's gesture, he remarked in an aside to those nearest him, "There is at least one man here who knows French!" It is abundantly evident that the royal personage in question was better acquainted with the language of the camp than with that of the Court. Since we are on the subject, we may be permitted to make a brief digression before taking up again the thread of our narrative.

During Victor Emmanuel's visit to Napoleon at the Tuileries, his brusque disregard of conventions, which amused the men around him, shocked the modesty—real or affected—of the ladies, and, indeed, until it had become used to him, continually astonished the French Court.

The Countess de Damrémont, a witty, intelligent woman, and a voluminous letter-writer, collected a number of the King of Italy's coarse jokes with which to spice her correspondence. Her letters, which have never been published, give a faithful chronicle of her times and show how, from pure good nature, she delighted the eyes and imagination of her absent friends. Some of the longest were addressed to the Ambassador Thouvenel, with the kindly intention of relieving the possible tedium of that gentleman's exile on the shores of the Bosphorus. She tells him how clumsily the King turned a compliment, and relates that when he attempted to express to the Empress his appreciation of the seductive charm of her person, he found no better simile than that she caused him to suffer all the tortures of Tantalus. Another story describes him protesting to Princess Mathilde that she exercised an extraordinary fascination over him, and that he wished she would receive him in her own house with closed doors, since even parted curtains would put him out of countenance! Then follow anecdotes such as this. He noticed

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE

one of the Empress's ladies-in-waiting, Madame de Malaret, standing amid a group of guests, looking very prim and demure. To her he declared, in a voice audible to every listener in the room, that he liked French women very much because they were so amiable, and because he had noticed since he had been in Paris that they dispensed with the frilled *pantalons* worn by the Turin ladies in that age of crinolines!

"I could fill twenty pages with stories such as these," continued Madame Damrémont. "But farewell, my dear Ambassador. You do well to love me a little, for I am very fond of you."

What impression would such a *galant' uomo* be likely to make on the women who knew him? There was certainly nothing ideal in him. But he was a king. And this was his sole recommendation to Madame de Castiglione when he sought the privilege of sharing her favours with her husband.

But his Minister, Cavour, who was related to both the Oldoïni and Castiglione families, discerned in the woman other qualities besides her physical charms. Looking at her with the eyes of the diplomatist, rather than the sentimentalist, he recognized instantly how well her talents might be made to serve his political ends. With her alert intelligence, supple yet dominating, she possessed in an eminent degree that distinctive feminine quality by which a clever woman can attract the masculine element; can obtain and preserve an abiding influence over those on whom she may choose to cast her spell.

Acting on his suggestion, but impelled also by all the forces of destiny towards Napoleon, Madame de Castiglione made her way to the land whose ruler, even in his lonely and exiled youth, when he could boast neither adherents nor influence, had ardently embraced the cause of Italian independence. Cavour found cogent reasons to console the King of Piedmont for the lady's departure. She,

on her part, knew well that a warm welcome awaited her. It is a fact not generally known that her father had acted as guardian to the son of Queen Hortense, and Louis Napoleon had been a frequent visitor at the Oldoïni palace. The charm of the child was not without its effect on him; he used to take her on his knee and lavish on her caresses strangely out of keeping with his usual coldness. Indeed there were ill-natured persons who saw in his affection for the little girl something almost paternal. Was it likely, therefore, that this friend of her childish days could be less than delighted to receive her at his brilliant Court amid all the pomp and splendour of his new imperial position? In her own person she would incarnate for him, in the most attractive way, Italy and the Italian question.

The first visit paid by Madame de Castiglione in Paris was both politic and friendly. She went straight to the Foreign Office, partly to secure the countenance of Walewski, and partly to see her compatriot, the Countess Walewska, who was, like herself, a Florentine.

She came to France, however, by no means as a total stranger. The fame of her charms had preceded her. The rumour of her extraordinary beauty had long since crossed the mountains. Those who knew her declared her to be the marvel of Italy. Before she had actually arrived, men were waiting impatiently to write their names on her visitors' list. Invitations at once poured in upon her. A grand ball at the Tuileries occurred just in time to furnish a suitable setting for her first appearance at Court.

She arrived rather late in the evening. A ripple of curiosity heralded her approach. As she entered, the sensation she caused was so marked that the dancing actually stopped. Even the music ceased. Like an electric current there ran round the room a magnetic thrill of admiration. The Empress advanced a step to meet her. The Emperor walked to the place where she

was seated, and, bidding Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg offer his hand to the Empress, he himself led out the newcomer. As Strauss's orchestra struck up once more the music of the dance, he valsed a few minutes with his guest; and then the pair walked and talked until the last strains of the band had died away.

All eyes were riveted on her. Her regular profile, the long eyes so full of fire, the tiny mouth, the superb masses of her hair, her slender throat rising so gracefully from the exquisitely moulded shoulders, the bust—of royal beauty—left free by her dress, seeming in its bold perfection of outline (to quote the words of an eye-witness) to challenge all other women, arms and hands charming in shape, a figure of faultless build: everything about her person compelled admiration and inspired love. The Countess's success was complete and triumphant. All were agreed that her first appearance at the Tuileries was the event of the week.

She took her honours very calmly. Even on those first evenings at the French Court, when the Marquis de Flammarens, a typical chamberlain of the old school, hastened to clear a way for the lovely stranger through the crowd of gold-laced coats, her composure was not the least disturbed at finding all eyes fixed upon her.

Her manner on the occasions of her public appearances, in the double panoply of her beauty and elegance, was always the same. Engrossed with the details of her own toilette, giving little pats to her head-dress, putting back in its place a rebellious curl, her glance as she walked through the rooms would be directed to the mirrors; she seemed to thank them for presenting her with so flattering a picture.

The men by common consent pronounced her peerless. But none were so convinced of the truth of this verdict as she herself. She had a sort of mystic cult for the beautiful as represented in her own person. Her mind,

and the greater part of her consciousness, seemed at all times to centre round this one thought, "I am beautiful." She had looked around her, had studied the women of the highest ranks of society as they sat in a circle in the royal drawing-rooms, and criticized them all with easy assurance; the result of her study was an imperturbable and lifelong confidence in herself. It was at this time of her life that she uttered the characteristic words which I have seen written on a photograph in the possession of Paul de Cassagnac, words eloquent of the perfection of serene pride: "I am their equal in birth; their superior in beauty; their judge in intellect."

How should she not have had her head turned by all the adulation she received? Countess Stéphanie tells us that when she appeared in her marvellous gowns at crowded gatherings, the people climbed on chairs to see her pass. When she went to London to visit the Exhibition and appeared at the Opera, she created so great a sensation that the audience actually climbed on the benches to gaze upon her.[1] Whether she came as spectator, listener, or speaker, she was equally the centre of a worshipping court.

Yet pretty and smiling faces were numerous at the Tuileries. They were as varied too as the flowers in a garden. Grecian profiles and Parisian piquancy; dreamy blue eyes, and orbs of velvety black; expressive, pale faces, and brilliant rosy hues; rounded arms, and graceful figures; all abounded. One might boast some attraction which another might envy. None, however, had the

[1] These statements seem incredible; the history of beautiful women furnishes, however, many similar instances. In an old and little-known book I have read accounts no less extraordinary of the sensation produced in the sixteenth century, at Toulouse, by a lady spoken of only as the beautiful Paule. When she appeared she was mobbed and followed as though she had been a revolutionary leader. The town councillors had to intervene to protect her from her worshippers, and the magistrate actually implored her to condescend to show herself twice a week in public.

faultless grace which placed Madame de Castiglione before them all. It has been said that there is no such thing as perfection. She was perfection itself, from the ends of her hair to the soles of her delicate little feet, which were as carefully tended as her hands. This detail, too, we have from eye-witnesses.

With all these charms, she possessed another — individuality. She borrowed from none and imitated none. Even in the matter of the fashion of her clothes she created a style of her own, adopting only such general lines from current fashions as she could mould to her own idiosyncrasy.

In this particular, be it said in passing, there was some friction between her and the Empress. Rivalry in hairdressing nearly cost Madame de Castiglione her invitations to Court. But, as might have been expected, there were other points of discord on the subject of dress between the sovereign and her Florentine guest, the former being essentially conservative and the latter almost revolutionary.

The Empress extended her favour to many singular inventions. She liked quantities of trimmings, mazes of muslins, innumerable petticoats and flounces, puffings and paddings out of all relation to the human form. Pending their return to favour, the fashions followed by the Empress seem laughable to women of to-day, with their slighter figures, longer waists and tightly fitting garments. Madame de Castiglione, for her part, was far too sensible of what was due to the lovely lines of her own person to attempt to disguise them beneath the hoops and excrescences of her time, and she showed herself at least forty years in advance of her contemporaries by steadily refusing to add a steel cage to her wardrobe. Quite unmoved by the gossip of those who professed themselves to be shocked by her low-cut evening bodices—bodices which look very inoffensive in the light of the fashions of

our days—she secured the admiration of all the men of the Court by electing to clothe herself in soft, clinging materials, which fitted her figure like a glove and threw into relief its soft, sinuous curves, blending in some subtle fashion with her own individuality.

Her greatest triumphs were achieved in the fancy-dress balls of the time. For these she gave her imagination full play and adopted costumes which did full justice to the wonderful modelling of her statuesque body. So bold, indeed, were some of these dresses that they gave rise to a host of stories, two or three of which we take this opportunity of correcting from the testimony of eye-witnesses.

One such tale, for instance, credits her with having made a more than sensational appearance at a Court ball in the character of Salammbô, draped in gauzes so transparent that the Empress was scandalized, and gave immediate orders to her chamberlain to conduct the new priestess of Tanit out of the imperial ballroom. As a matter of fact, Madame de Castiglione was never exposed to this indignity, either at the Tuileries or at Compiègne, the incident in question having happened to a very different person, a Russian lady, whose name, we are in a position to state, was Madame Korsakof.

A second episode is that of the "Queen of Hearts." A youthful witch of gipsy hue, her hair falling over her shoulders, attracted all eyes by the curious ornaments of her costume. These ornaments consisted of a number of hearts scattered over the dress, some being in places in which one would hardly expect to find that symbol. This time Madame de Castiglione was actually the wearer. Thirty years later M. d'Antas described to a few friends the sensation caused by this daring toilette. The Empress congratulated her on it, but added: "Your heart seems a little low down!"

M. d'Antas subsequently inquired of the Empress

whether the incident had really taken place, but she replied that if so she had forgotten it, and that if the remark attributed to her had been faithfully reported she had made it in all good faith. . . . The incident actually occurred not at the Tuileries, but at the Foreign Office, in the Countess Walewska's drawing-rooms, and according to Madame de la Pagerie, who was also present, the hostess herself was the most charming figure there. It was from that lady that we have been fortunate enough to learn the details, which are as fresh in her memory to-day as ever they were.

The intrepid Florentine had invented the most suggestive and fanciful costume ever put together.[1] Partly Louis XV and partly Second Empire, the dress was startling. She wore no corset; and the beautiful curves of her bosom, in its proud independence of all artificial support, were left almost wholly exposed by the light drapery of gauze. Her skirt was raised and caught back in the fashion of the eighteenth century, showing the under petticoat; and over both skirt and bodice was thrown a chain of large hearts. With her abundant hair falling round her shoulders, Madame de Castiglione may be said to have carried in her train all the hearts she had thus daringly symbolized.

Long afterwards, this dress was remembered and discussed, with envy by women, and with pagan admiration by men, and indeed its voluptuous revelations fully justified both. She herself remembered it well. On page 148 of a volume of *Mon Séjour aux Tuileries*, now in M. Gabriel Hanotaux's library, in the margin of a passage in which a flattering description of her charms is given by the Countess Stéphanie Tascher de la Pagerie, she wrote:

[1] I have the Marquis de Fraysseix's authority for stating that the Countess's dresser on this occasion was no other than the celebrated singer, Mario di Candia, the handsomest of Almavivas, and the spoilt darling of duchesses. It was his hand that had arranged the suggestive hearts which drew all eyes and inspired libertine suggestions.

"This was the Queen of Hearts. Exhibition portrait, 1867."

Much less than this would have sufficed to account for the decided weakness of Napoleon III for Madame de Castiglione.

But we have already shown that in coming to the Court of France she had other objects in view than to display her beauty and become the object of passions in high places. In all the whirl of fashionable engagements[1] which occupied her time, and through all the assiduous court paid to her person, she never lost sight of the secret mission with which she had been charged. The Countess had come from Turin to Paris with the definite object of taking advantage of Napoleon's weakness for women to obtain a personal ascendency over him which she could turn to the advantage of Italian diplomacy. Her mission was in fact official, as may be seen from the following letter:—

"A lovely countess," writes Cavour to Luigi Cibrario, chargé d'affaires at the Foreign Office, "is now enrolled in the Diplomatic Corps of Piedmont. I have asked her to flirt with—and, if necessary, to seduce—the Emperor. I have promised, if she succeeds, to give her brother a secretaryship at St. Petersburg. She made her début yesterday at the concert at the Tuileries."

Although Madame de Castiglione always energetically denied that she had ever given the Empress any real cause of offence, her public never quite accepted the statement. More than once the fate of a crown has hung upon a lady's garter. She regretfully recognized the truth of this saying later in life.

"My mother was a fool," she once said frankly to a

[1] Within a few days of the declaration of war with Austria there was a rage for fancy-dress dances in Paris. Masked balls followed in quick succession at the Court, at the Minister Fould's, Madame de Bassano's, the Albe mansion, and the newly created Duc Tascher de la Pagerie also took part in the musical revels.

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE AS "SADNESS" IN A TABLEAU VIVANT

friend, who repeated the statement to us. "If she had brought me to Paris earlier, instead of marrying me to Castiglione, you would have seen an Italian instead of a Spaniard reigning at the Tuileries."

It was her ambition to be a political force. She never forgave herself for arriving too late, as she fancied. At any rate, she was careful to bear in mind the instructions Cavour had given her and her own patriotic aims; she brought all her influence, all her fascinations, to bear upon Napoleon, who still remained undecided. He had been turning the matter over in his mind a long time. He had even brought out a pamphlet on the Italian question in which his own views were set forth. She had arrived just at the right moment, and she possessed accurate information of the promises made long before by the then adventurer of the Romagna to the leaders of the extreme party in Italy. At that period, when his own fortune and future were so obscure, he had nourished two secret ambitions: one—the principal, since on its realization depended the second—was to recover his ancestral heritage and to become either Consul or Emperor; and the second, to restore the independence of Italy. He had solemnly promised to set her free, from the Alps to the Adriatic.

Quick to see his weak side, she flattered his vanity and fed his belief in himself as the man called upon to play a preponderant rôle in Europe, and thus she hastened the realization of an active foreign policy which he had long meditated. Cavour was a great gambler.[1] He staked all on the beauty of Madame de Castiglione, and he had no cause to regret his faith in her as the trump card in his own hand.

Gifted as she undoubtedly was with a very active mind, speaking and writing almost all European languages,

[1] In his youth he played heavily. His friends in Paris never forgot his prowess at the card-table, when he used to display the same audacity and self-possession which distinguished his conduct on more momentous occasions.

always eager for information and ready for intrigue, quick to give advice and speedy in action, driving rapidly every day from one minister to another—her hands full of documents, her portfolio bursting with papers and notes—forced by circumstances into correspondence with almost every prince and governor in Europe, it was only natural that she should have entertained a very high opinion of her own diplomatic and political talents. There is no doubt that she was in constant correspondence with the Government of Turin, and afterwards with that of Rome, and the fact is proved by the anxiety shown by the Italian Government to obtain possession of all Madame de Castiglione's papers at her death and to deal with them in such a way as to leave no clue to their contents. There is, moreover, little doubt that she contributed greatly to keeping the Pope in Rome, when Victor Emmanuel sent her as his special messenger to the Pontiff, armed with promises and conciliatory offers.[1] It may safely be said that it was her influence with Napoleon, who was already biased in favour of Italy, which led him to call for the inclusion of Count Cavour in the Congress of Paris,[2] when the subject of Italian unity came under consideration.

While it would, however, be absurd to go so far as to

[1] She used to enjoy showing a bracelet which the Pope had given her on that occasion, together with a tiara.

[2] Madame de Castiglione was a true Italian, and she never wearied of expressing her admiration for the great intelligence and real genius of Cavour. In a book, formerly her property, whose margins she filled with notes, I have noticed that she underlines with evident conviction every word relating to the celebrated Turin politician. Close to his name she wrote the title of which she was so proud, "My Cousin." She never denied his extreme ugliness. On the contrary, she acknowledges it with a light, almost approving, stroke of her pencil. Wherever his moral qualities are concerned, however, whether his quick intelligence or the creative force that shone in his eye and surrounded the man like an atmosphere, these passages are heavily scored. When the writer of the book pays a tribute to his intense patriotism, his single-minded devotion to his country, and his determination to aggrandize her by every means in his power, then his admiring cousin traces double wavy lines of enthusiasm round the printed word!

declare that Madame de Castiglione's influence brought about the war, yet it is abundantly proved that in the interchange of correspondence between France and Italy she played an active part. With the feminine talent for magnifying the importance of her acts, and setting forth her own value in a neat sentence, she cried in a moment of enthusiasm one fine day, "I have created Italy and saved the papacy!"

This grandiloquent phrase is to be found in a letter written to General Estancelin, in which she complains bitterly of the want of recognition her services had met with, and accuses all the princes of the earth of base ingratitude. But we will quote part of the letter in question:—

"When a sovereign or a prince relies on a *friend*, and on his entire devotion, he does not think it possible that this friend may rebel on purpose to advance his sovereign's interests; may even thrust him forward by main force, or toss him out of the window at the risk of his neck—as Mocquart did to Napoleon at Ham, because it was absolutely necessary. It was Mocquart who made Napoleon Emperor; but I would have made him a conqueror, as in fact I had already begun to do, in word and in deed, in private and in public, thereby drawing down upon myself endless animosity and obloquy, notwithstanding the obvious disinterestedness of my actions. I claimed no personal glory, yet a host of people turned against me, and why? Because I carried Victor Emmanuel to Rome and overthrew seven Napoleonic, Bourbon, and Papal dynasties. At least there was some credit in having, alone and unaided, prepared for such events. I, the Italian woman, would never have created a Mexico, nor like the Spanish woman, brought about the defeat of Sedan, the fall of the Empire, and the dismemberment of France. But there is a curse on the Tuileries with their unending changes of governments and dynasties. Read its history; the worst in everything is to be found at the

Louvre. . . . Ah! if I had been a Catherine! . . . But my Napoleon did not dare,[1] and I abandoned him and his concerns."

It would not be possible for a beautiful and powerful Italian to be connected with the intrigues of a court and escape suspicion of complicity with some dark deed—some mysterious plot complicated either by poison or the knife. The Castiglione was no exception to this rule.

Her life was full of romantic adventures, of incidents worthy of Boccaccio's inventive genius and also of episodes allied to the tragic.

A terrible tale is told by one of Napoleon III's secret agents, the Corsican Griscelli, who relates it in the emphatic and authoritative style peculiar to the Saltabadil of the Imperial Secret Police. This tale, of which the Countess is the heroine, seems to call for the brush and lurid colours of the writers of sensational novelettes.

It happened very shortly after the first appearance of the fascinating Florentine at the Tuileries. The Emperor who concealed an impatient temper beneath his icy mask, had made the most of the short interval. The august visitor was expected at Madame de Castiglione's residence, the Hôtel Beauvau. In such matters secret precautions were always taken to ensure the personal safety of the monarch. His aide-de-camp, General Fleury, who had been informed of the Emperor's engagement, gave orders for Griscelli to come and call for the sovereign at eight o'clock that evening. The General feared an ambush, or some treachery. The Corsican arrived before the stipulated hour. Seeing him thus early, Napoleon, who was so accustomed to the important airs of his agent that he could detect the existence of some

[1] Piedmont, Victor Emmanuel, Cavour, and his cousin, Madame de Castiglione, were not entirely satisfied; they had hoped for the whole of Italy. But scarcely had Napoleon III put his army in motion than he found himself cheated by Prussia and menaced by Austria, and in spite of the wrath of Italy and the protests of Cavour, he concluded a preliminary treaty of peace.

fresh police mystery in his first glance at the man, at once asked, "What is the news?"

Griscelli replied with another question—

"Sir, I want to know where we are going?"

"Why?"

"Because I am afraid that something may happen to-night."

Hereupon Fleury entered. They left without further delay, going out by the Tuileries gardens—Napoleon, his aide-de-camp, and the hero of vendettas.

When they reached the house they found it but dimly lighted up.

"Pray look out, General," murmured Griscelli; "remember we are in the house of an Italian."

They walked softly up the stairs, making no noise. When they reached the landing, a door of the apartment opened; a young maidservant[1] ushered in the Emperor and the General and then returned to the landing, where, out of sight, the detective watched in the darkness. What had brought the girl back? He wondered and waited. She clapped her hands three times—a signal, no doubt. Instantly a man appeared; impossible to say whence he had sprung. He went towards the door of the drawing-room, but before he could turn the handle he fell dead. One blow struck from above had entered his heart. The sound of the falling body, the cry of the maid, startled Fleury. He hastened to the spot, seized the girl, and shut her into a cupboard, while Griscelli dragged the body out of sight. Then, returning to the drawing-room, he closed the door upon "the dangerous siren" and carried off the Emperor, making a sign to Griscelli to wait where he was. He was back again in a few minutes with two carriages, and accompanied by Zambo, of the secret police. In the first carriage they placed the servant-

[1] There is reason to believe that this was the "Corsi" who was in Madame de Castiglione's service to the day of her death.

girl and the corpse, while Fleury rode in the second with the lady suspected of having plotted the death of the Emperor. By this time the sovereign was back again in the palace, and Griscelli, who had the privilege of entering at all hours, went straight to his study, where he found him seated with his elbow on the table and his head resting on his hand. As the man came in the Emperor lifted his eyes and said sadly—

"More blood! Why did you strike? It was probably some harmless wretch who had come to see the maid."

"Servants' sweethearts are not generally furnished with introductions of this pattern," replied the detective, eager to produce the evidences of his zealous sagacity. He drew from his pocket a revolver and stiletto with poisoned blade which he had discovered on the person of his victim. Napoleon examined both carefully, minutely scrutinizing the blade of the dagger, and then allowed himself to be convinced. He rewarded his servant, who had thus apparently saved his life, with the sum of three thousand francs, ordering him to report the matter to Pietri.

"I shall tell him nothing about it, sir," Griscelli rejoined, as he left the room.

Griscelli adds to his narrative, that in consequence of this incident, the Countess de Castiglione was escorted to the Italian frontier. There, according to his story, the lady, whom he calls the "Duchess," repaired at once to the Count d'Arese[1] and informed him of what had occurred, threatening to make startling revelations unless the Emperor allowed her to return to France. The threat was not without effect. Shortly after, the Countess celebrated her return to Paris by holding a great reception.

[1] This person was an old friend of Louis Napoleon in the days when the young Prince resided in Switzerland. He was a Milanese noble of the advanced Liberal party, and, after Villafranca, had been asked to form a ministry, an offer, however, which he refused. He was looked upon in certain quarters with suspicion, on account of his known attachment to the French Emperor.

There is a grain of truth in this tale, though the date is vaguely indicated by this police official, who for nine years flattered himself that he was the chief executioner of a second Richard, was in fact his very shadow. To sift the false from the true; to strip off the evident exaggeration with which the man handles the event so as to lend importance to his own rôle; to synchronize exactly the incident with the many plots hatched by the secret societies of the day against the ex-Carbonaro, who was so dilatory in fulfilling his promises; to unravel the threads of this treble enigma, and to decide whether the Florentine actually lent herself to this mysterious affair, is indeed a matter of difficulty.

He who was most intimately acquainted with all the details in the life of Madame de Castiglione wrote to me recently, saying:—

"Did I remind you that one of the secret police about the person of the Emperor tried to get *some one I know* to assassinate the Chief; and that this person was connected with the Countess? Did I send you the echo of that interview at which only they two were present?

"'If I had had him murdered, what would you have said?'

"'Nothing, I am never taken by surprise. But in this case it would not have been the vengeance of a lover, nor would it have been for personal advantage. It must then have been for a political reason. But what?'

"What indeed? And what was the origin of the rupture between him and her? Deception? satiety? or what?

"In that disturbed and adventurous career, there are no doubt very many depths yet to be sounded. Moreover with a woman, and a political woman especially, can one ever find out the truth? "GENERAL ESTANCELIN.

"March 20th, 1904."

The Countess de Castiglione took occasion to return at

this juncture to Turin and devoted herself to the education of her son. With no particular show of affection for the child, she gave him careful lessons in English, French, and German—languages which she spoke with the same facility as her native Italian.

She took up her residence in a solitary villa above the city which commanded a magnificent panoramic view, with the long chain of Alps on the distant horizon.

It was here that in the winter of 1860 she received the visit of the French diplomatist, Henry d'Ideville, who was presented to her by the Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne. This gentleman has left a very graphic account of his meeting with the beautiful recluse.

A steep path up the hillside led to the Villa Gloria. A wooden gate marked the entrance of the modest and somewhat melancholy-looking house. It stood in a garden which must have been lovely and gay in summer when the flowers were in bloom, but which in winter, when the trees were bare and the paths hidden under the snow, was far from lending cheerfulness to the view. The door opened directly into the hall. A servant dressed in black led the visitors up to the first floor, on which Madame de Castiglione passed most of her time, alone or with her child who was then playing at her side. The boy was five years of age, gentle and beautiful as a girl; his fair hair curled round his brow, his arms and shoulders were bare, and his great liquid eyes filled with childish surprise at the sight of the company.

Madame de Castiglione seemed cold and silent, uttering no word not actually necessary. Her door was practically closed to all her fellow-countrymen of Turin. She received only a few foreigners, chiefly French. The first impression she produced on strangers was perforce one of admiration, but an admiration that was cold and without enthusiasm. Her expression was generally authoritative rather than affable. Her face was apt to bear the haughty

expression peculiar to women too long accustomed to hear their beauty praised.

The young diplomatist feasted his eyes on the purity and harmonious perfection of form of this surprisingly lovely woman. But he left her with his heart and head cool and undisturbed, walking back down the hill with his friend and colleague, Baron de Chollet, who had accompanied him on this first visit. A second and then a third call followed. His feelings, however, remained unchanged. He had heard many unfavourable criticisms of this singular woman. "She is too beautiful," said the women of his world, "and, fortunately, she is nothing else." "She is a thorough egoist," others had said; "amid all her triumphs in Paris she showed herself to be capricious and wholly incapable of affection, and moreover, with all her almost miraculous advantages, she has never succeeded in inspiring a real and a serious passion." Her critics, indeed went almost so far as to deny her any degree of intelligence. D'Ideville was perfectly familiar with all these ungenerous statements. He called five or six times at the Villa Gloria, and still felt unable to form a decisive opinion of his own.

He found it hard to believe, however, that beneath the exterior of a goddess there shone no spark of divine light. Here was a woman whose appearances in Paris and London had assumed the importance of a public event, who was, nevertheless, living in voluntary banishment, in studied isolation, and already indulging those habits of mystery which she practised at intervals long before she withdrew into the impenetrable seclusion in which her life ended. In so young a woman this complete indifference to all outside influences which might have tended to disturb the cherished monotony of her days whetted his curiosity. Surely she must conceal within herself uncommon resources, spiritual and intellectual, which were wholly unsuspected by the world. To form his

own convictions he continued to climb the road to the villa.

He was beginning to lose all hope of solving the riddle, and had almost decided to give it up, when he found himself once again outside her garden gate. As chance would have it, she was quite alone. It was a revelation. At last she consented to open her lips for something more than the commonplaces of a formal visit. The conversation quickly took an interesting turn. He found her full of originality and nobility of mind, with a broad and generous outlook of which he had never before suspected her.

How was it that she had been so misrepresented? How was it that the world had judged her to be at once so richly and so poorly endowed? Those few minutes' conversation showed her to be as superior to the majority of her sex mentally as—by universal acknowledgment—she was physically. The melancholy which characterized her, and the contempt she so freely expressed for the rest of humanity, were merely the result of the too speedy shattering of her hopes and ambitions.

"I had scarcely begun my life," she said, "when my rôle was ended."

Thoughtfully he took leave of her, and, as he made his way down the hill, he reflected upon what he had just heard. The charm had begun to work. From that time their meetings became more frequent, more protracted. She grew to trust him. Soon she was almost confidential with him, and he fell under the spell of a novel kind of intercourse. D'Ideville was not long in learning the story of one part of her life; and he soon saw that she was glad to find a companion capable of understanding her nature. Often they went boating together; then for his benefit she would weave the web of her memories on the thread of the sparkling river, and was naïve in her confidences. He could not resist jotting down on

COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE IN TABLEAUX VIVANTS—ARMED FOR CONQUEST

paper the impressions he received, and reading them later on to the woman who had inspired them. With a kind of proud candour she added to his story the following lines:—

"Il Padre eterno non sapeva cosa si faceva quel giorno che l' ha messo al mondo; ha impastata tanto e tanto, e quando l' ha avato fatta, ha perso la testa vedendo la sua maravigliosa opera, e l' ha lasciata li, en un cinto, senza metterla a posto. In tanto, l' hanno chiamato da un altra parte, e quando e tornato l' a trovata fuori di posto."

"The Eternal Father Himself did not know the thing He had created when He brought her into the world; He moulded and fashioned her, until, when she was complete, He lost His head before His own marvellous work; and He left her in a corner, instead of putting her in her true place. Thereupon, He was called away elsewhere, and when He returned—she was not to be found."

Those who were not in the secret of Madame de Castiglione's designs, and who knew nothing of the extensive correspondence her remarkable linguistic accomplishments enabled her to carry on with foreign diplomatists, little suspected her true rôle. She maintained the strictest reserve about her cherished plans, and was judged wholly by the little she allowed her public to see. Few had more than the most superficial acquaintance with either her faculties or her intelligence. Her conversation was of the liveliest and lightest, indulgent to the licence of gallantry; one took pleasure in it, and asked nothing more. Some who denied to her any merit but that of her beauty declared that her mind was insipid and wholly insignificant. In reality she was exceedingly susceptible to the influence of art. She showed remarkable perspicacity in political matters; and if she had had greater facilities and a more extended sphere of action, she would have left no doubts as to her tendencies and ambitions.

The one thing clear and indubitable about her was the exceptional position she had obtained.

Her startling success on her first appearance in the world of court intrigue and coquetry had never been forgotten by those who had witnessed it. When she finally returned to society, it was with the same confident air that she had worn through her early triumphs.

The critics in the feminine camp were up in arms. Her taste in dress, which was not, indeed, quite unimpeachable, her audacious coquetry with its curious blending of southern carelessness and individual eccentricity, were keenly discussed wherever she passed. She remained, however, wholly indifferent to these pin-pricks, and appealed from the judgment of the women to the more flattering verdict of the men. Her own opinion was already formed, and nothing could shake it.

I came across proofs of this fact in a book in which she had made copious notes. In the little corrections made in pencil, and in the underscoring of certain passages bearing reference to her person, her faith in herself stands out with strange clearness.

"On her beautiful face," says the authoress, who was the reader and companion to the Empress, "there was an expression of *haughtiness*, of *hardness*. . . ."

These words are crossed out in her copy of the work, and in their place she had written, "*pride*, *gentleness*."

When Madame Carette goes on to add: "There was no charm. . . ." "A mistake," she writes, without further commentary.

It would appear that the Empress's ladies-in-waiting and the intimates of the palace looked on the Countess with the same reserve as their sovereign, and treated her with a coldness and neglect which she was by no means the last to perceive. On the first page of her copy of *Souvenirs de la Cour*, I find this furtive indication:—

"The ladies-in-waiting whose duty it was to serve the

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE IN TABLEAUX VIVANTS—PIOUS MEDITATION

tea neglected to offer me a cup, but I got the Princess of Moskowa to serve me."

But if the ladies of the Imperial circle were less than cordial to her, she on her side was no less sparing of civilities. Occasionally, however, she acknowledged the charms of other women and did them full justice, with the greater readiness, perhaps, that she was far from looking on any one of them as a possible rival. Her superiority was so great that her generosity in praise of others cost her nothing. She would freely express her admiration for a pretty look, a sweet mouth, a finely rounded shoulder, a supple figure, a graceful walk. She had a quick eye for a good feature, for a well-moulded form, and registered it involuntarily in some corner of her memory, or among her papers, as something to be preserved.

Thus she was present at a hunting accident, which occurred in the woods of Compiègne, when General Bertrand's daughter, Madame Hortense Thayer, was thrown from her horse. Later she came across an account of the incident in a chapter of Countess Stephanie's *Souvenirs*, and wrote the significant and laconic note in the margin: "Arm broken . . . beautiful leg." Is not this detail admirable, noted as an important item by "the divinity" whose own arm, hand, leg, had been modelled by artists as enthusiastic as she was complacent!

In a general way she used frankly to admit that she did not care much for the society, conversation, or character of womenkind. I think she liked them only as seen in her own mirror. She was a thousand times happier chatting seriously or lightly with a few chosen men friends. She would discuss love without the slightest prudishness, allowed a good deal of freedom in her presence, and was willing to touch upon the subject in her flirtations, or occasionally in her letters. She passed for being cold, as are in fact most beauties whose mission is to charm the eye rather than to share the emotion of the senses.

Indeed, she would never consent to attach much importance to this side of life. She had no doubt experienced that brief shock of love's electricity which is not the least of life's joys. But to her this was only a passing emotional surprise. In a letter, too frank to be quoted in its entirety, she writes to a correspondent who had been apparently dwelling on the past:—

"Well! what if this and that did exist between you and me . . . these are old things which were, because there was a reason for them. A meeting, an accident. Of what use afterwards to stir the ashes of a dead fire?"

Apart from the ambitions which continually haunted her—ambitions, in truth, empty enough—great passions left her soul untouched. To busy herself with public affairs; to correspond from a distance about politics; to expound the oracular pronouncements of diplomacy; to nurse, if only in imagination, world-embracing projects; to play a part, however secret and obscure, in international affairs—these were the things that pleased her active mind. She laboured for these ends, paid innumerable visits, sent and received lengthy reports, distributed items of news to financiers, and never wearied of inventing far-reaching schemes.

To what degree did Madame de Castiglione manage to influence Napoleon III on foreign questions? We have only cursory and insufficient means of judging. It is easier to measure the influence she undoubtedly exercised on his heart and senses. In the last years of her life, prompted by a scruple easy to understand, she used to protest that she had never given the Empress any real cause of jealousy. Her faithful companion, Luisa Corsi however, told a different tale to a well-known journalist, who did not hesitate to make it public. And it is certain that Madame de Castiglione recorded the day—or rather the night—of her fall (or of her triumph) in the draft of her will. In this document, which we have had in our

hands, we have seen in her own writing, and emphatically underlined, the following directions for her last toilette: "The Compiègne nightdress of cambric and lace, 1857."

The preliminary phases of the adventure were sufficiently obvious.

She had been staying rather more than a fortnight at the palace of Compiègne. One evening, when the company of the Comédie Française were giving a performance in the private theatre, she complained of a slight headache and excused herself from appearing. It was noticed that the Emperor in his box seemed nervous and absent-minded, fingering and pulling his moustache more than usual. When the curtain fell for the first interval he vanished, forsaking the Empress before the eyes of all the Court. Next morning it was common knowledge that he had made personal inquiries after the health of the lovely Florentine.

The Emperor also paid her other visits in Paris—evening calls in the quiet house in the Rue de la Pompe, whose double exit, secret staircase, and general air of mystery seem to have been expressly designed for lovers' meetings.

A quiet knock or ring. A hatch in the great door stealthily opened. . . . Who goes there? His dear Highness. A ray of light shows the way to the boudoir. The interview would last an hour or two. Then the same ceremonial on leaving as on arriving. The Chief of the State (though by no means discreet on such occasions) always observed strict reticence as to the object of these unofficial outings. He was always accompanied at a distance by one of the secret police, specially appointed to be the guard of his imperial person, but he exposed himself to dangerous risks, and for a second time narrowly escaped the assassin's knife as he left Madame de Castiglione's house. He had repaired thither incognito in his small brougham, with no servant but his trusted

coachman, and had left the house at three in the morning. Just as the carriage was driving out of the courtyard he was suddenly attacked by three armed men. The coachman whipped up his horses; they dashed forward, knocking over one of the men, and the Emperor was carried safely back to the Tuileries.

But this *liaison*, notwithstanding the secrecy which Napoleon feigned to observe respecting it, was known to all the Court. A few who were in a position to see clearly what was going on still affected to know nothing and to throw doubt on its existence. Amongst them was the Countess Potocka, who had a vast admiration for the great Emperor, but none at all for Napoleon III.

"Scandal-mongers," she writes to the Countess Sophie Wodzicka, "maintain that Madame de Castiglione will have to take the waters at Plombières.[1] For my part I do not believe it, for in my opinion the charmer is not charming enough."

Very likely, but a crown is a jewel which has the gift of transforming the wearer. And with all due deference to her opinion, the general public by no means shared it. At a fancy-dress ball given by the Duchesse de Bassano there was an infinite variety of masks: amongst the men were jesters, clowns, nobles of bygone times, and photographers of the day; those who affected this last style wore on their shoulders collections of photographs of many of the women assembled in the ballroom. The Emperor, wearing a domino, spent some minutes examining these photographs. He seized two, one of which represented the beautiful Italian, and demanded, not without a touch of annoyance, "What is she doing here?" Whereupon a bystander is reported to have rejoined, "Sir, why do you want the copy, when you already possess the original?"

When she had moved into the Rue de Castiglione, the Emperor also went there from time to time. On the

[1] The Emperor had gone there.

ground floor of the house, now occupied by a fashionable dressmaker, we were shown an ingenious mechanism by the use of which the door, turning on a pivot, effectively concealed the person entering or leaving. It has been erroneously stated that Napoleon visited her also in her house in the Place Vendôme, but this was impossible, as she did not move there until after his death.

In a letter, dated August, 1900, written by M. H. D——, owner of the property, we read: "It was on 25 December, 1876, that Madame de Castiglione moved into the house in the Place Vendôme; she had asked permission to take possession of her apartment there at midnight, so that she might arrive *like the infant Jesus.*"

The relations between Madame de Castiglione and Napoleon were notorious. Of her friendships and connexions with others it is difficult to speak quite accurately. On the pages of her intimate life indiscreet anecdotists have inscribed many doubtful stories. A passing caprice, a mysterious summons, never probably repeated, the curiosity of a woman who had received the homage of many and who desired in her turn to exercise the privilege of choice —who knows? Whatever foundation there may have been for stories such as these, they have lost nothing, one may safely believe, in the telling. There is always a natural inclination to exaggerate, if not to invent, stories of amiable weaknesses. A few of hers, however, are well authenticated, and were currently noted and commented on.

Lord Hertford, a leading member of the English nobility, a marquis, Knight of the Garter, and fabulously wealthy, came for a brief moment into her life. For her this gentleman, who was not usually lavish either of his money or his pains, played the rôle of Jupiter, transforming himself into a golden shower in order to win the favours of Danaë.

It appears, however, that the noble lord had nothing but his millions to recommend him, and that Madame de Castiglione clearly realized the fact. This is apparent in a

few pencil notes made by her in a volume dealing with the English peer, in which she has underlined certain unflattering details of the picture, as for instance this touching his person :—

"He looks gloomy, almost sinister; he rolls his eyes wildly, like the tyrant in a melodrama."

And this about his morals :—

"He runs after women, but that is no proof of love."

She makes no sign of assent when she reaches this statement :—

"His manner is exquisite, bearing the polish of the great nobleman."

But prompted, perhaps, by some slight and not unpleasing reminiscence, her pencil has underscored the words :—

"He was ever faithful to the motto of his order—'Honi soit qui mal y pense.'"[1]

One wonders whether she found that other lover more sentimental—the man of business and pleasure combined—whom she met in 1861 under better auspices. Ought we to reveal the fact, hitherto unknown, that she then made a short flight to Italy, to install herself near Laffitte? The episode was known to very few, and we need not dwell upon it.

There are several other prominent and well-known men who enjoyed her warmest sympathy. Both before and after the fall of the Empire the Duc d'Aumale was on a footing of tender familiarity with her. The château of Baromesnil contains numerous written relics, dedications and floral tributes, all cherished in memory of their illustrious sender.

But the attachment of the Countess to the Napoleonic dynasty did not prevent her from maintaining very affectionate relations with the Princes of the House of

[1] Richard, fourth Marquis of Hertford, was made K.G. in 1846. He was born in 1800, and died unmarried in 1870.

COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE DRESSED AS THE WIFE OF A DOGE

Orléans. To the end of his life the Duc de Chartres was one of her most faithful servants. The same is true of Baron Alphonse de Rothschild; and, without committing any serious indiscretion, it may be stated that one of the most ardent Royalists, General Estancelin, was for forty-five years one of the lady's most loyal friends.

In the history of the communion of these two souls there is one romantic episode which deserves to be made known.

It happened very many years ago at Twickenham, at the house then occupied by the Duc d'Aumale. A guest of the Prince's was working one day in the library. He was a fine-looking man, in the prime of life. With the enthusiasm of the student reflected on his face, he was living again through scenes of the past. He had in his hand some priceless family archives which absorbed his whole attention. It was the original text of a letter written by Richelieu to Louis XIII, to explain the reasons of State which had caused him to order the execution of Cinq Mars and his friend De Thou. He was still poring over this document, written by so cold and cruel a hand, when a servant entered the library and informed him that a lady and young child were in the drawing-room. In the absence of the Duke he went somewhat unwillingly to receive the guests. He found a very attractive-looking woman seated just under the portrait of the Cardinal Minister who was engrossing his mind. Their eyes met. She was struck by his grave air—the reflection of the passages he had just been reading. He, on his side, recognized at a glance all the feminine charm that surrounded her like an atmosphere. The fine appearance of the man and the energy that marked his bearing were not without effect on her; but it was not the magnetic shock from which love is born. They could never again be indifferent to each other; but the outcome of this meeting was friendship—a perfect and unreserved comradeship which lasted till death.

This first meeting in 1850 was marked in the calendar of her life. Forty years later we find her celebrating its anniversary—"our Pearl Wedding," she called it; and in a letter dated November 25, 1895, there is a trace of bitterness visible as she reflects on what might have been, but never was.

"With such an accumulation of proofs of devoted and loyal friendship, there is still doubt, suspicion, accusation! Cannot our *love-esteem* protect us from blindness of heart? Is all its strength indeed but weakness?"

Estancelin's acquaintance with Madame de Castiglione had begun when she was in the prime of her beauty, yet her physical charms never had the smallest hold over him. He had sworn that no woman should exercise any direct influence on his actions, although he acknowledged their power to gladden his life. Beneath her delicate exterior he perceived her decided and dominant nature, and his own sense of independence was repelled. An instinctive distrust preserved him from a passion which must have entailed subjection. She, on the other hand, was attracted towards him. He steeled himself against her. Recognizing this attitude in him, she wrote, partly in fun, partly in vexation: "Oh, I see plainly how it is. The woman who could influence you has yet to be born." A long time afterwards, when youth and beauty both had fled, and old age permitted of perfect frankness, she looked back, not without sadness, on her life; and concluded a few lines of weak verse in Italian with the plaintive words:—

"The past? No, I will not recall for you its sad memories. The future? No; rather will I let all Hope's fond delusions go. The present? In this alone we live, but in turn it escapes our grasp and is lost like the flash of lightning which rends the cloud and disappears forthwith. Our life is but a memory, a hope, an end!

. . . . . .

"This is the reason why I did not take the man of whom I believed I had a glimpse at Dieppe one evening in my eighteenth year. Because I did not find in *you* all I hoped, nor all I needed to *really live*, nor all you needed *to become* the one person I could have loved with more than a passing passion, exclusively, proudly, openly. What I wanted was a serious, deep, lasting bond, to be handed down by us to our descendants, to be hidden under no iron mask; without shame, fear, or scruples. No half-love, or carefully concealed affection. A connexion accepted by the world, admitted in society, received at Court, recognized by our families, sanctified by time—a union of mind as of body, that we two might fight heart to heart, our eyes fixed on the same goal, both devoted to the same cause, the same willing service. And we might have accomplished much, for we two, man and woman, should have been but one. Not finding this, I would accept no less."[1]

And yet it was commonly said of Madame de Castiglione that she was cold, indifferent, soulless, and wholly

[1] In his time Estancelin, who was a deputy at twenty-four, was not without his ambitions and vast designs. He started life light of heart, confident in his own powers, like a lover who sees before him only success and pleasure, great hopes realized and a morrow full of promise. His youthful successes seemed to promise this. Those were troublous times. For a young man of action, with the fighting spirit, there was a wide field. The political situation, with its constant agitations and revolutions, its sudden reverses of fortune, was all in favour of a clever man. His nature prompted him to decisive action. He immediately made his choice of party as of principle and never swerved from either. But unhappily the heirs of the monarchical tradition, to whose interests he devoted his life, were not favoured by fortune; the opportunity hoped for never came. He was compelled to resign himself to fulfilling duties which brought no glory in their wake, and his strong hand and active brain brought him no reward for a lifelong devotion and unbroken loyalty to a lost cause. Yet his career was not wholly without glory, for we must not forget that this was the man who in 1870 placed forty thousand soldiers, raised and paid by himself, at the disposal of General Chanzy at Le Mans, and that he successfully accomplished the task entrusted to him by the Committee of Public Defence on September 29, when he led his columns to Paris and approached nearer the walls of the besieged city than any other commander.

absorbed in satisfying her personal vanity! This little outburst is warm and rings true. Character and temperament are visible in every line, while her ideal and her sentiment of faithfulness bear the imprint of a passion such as only an Italian woman ever feels for the man of her choice, whether husband or lover. Even the little wail for the lost or vanished hours is touching. It is true that Madame de Castiglione locked this sentiment within her breast until late in life, and we cannot but remark that in the interval which elapsed between her youthful disappointment and her belated regrets her life was by no means empty nor her heart untouched.

However much society may have gossiped about the number and diversity of her feelings, whether platonic or otherwise, it would appear that the Court took no exception to them. Madame de Castiglione did as she pleased with the Court circle as she did with its master. The Empress admitted her to her Mondays, though apparently with reluctance. On the other hand, the Princess Mathilde received her cordially, inviting her to her dinners and receptions, enjoining on her own artist Giraud to make of the portrait on which he was engaged, in 1857, the masterpiece which the subject demanded, and showing signal marks of her favour. The Princess's affability to the fair Italian may perhaps in part be attributed to the fact that relations were just then somewhat strained between herself and the Empress. The Empress made no secret of her coldness for Her Imperial Highness, and for some time past she had omitted to invite that lady to her state dinners.[1] However that may have been, Madame de Castiglione was only so much the more welcome in the Rue de Courcelles.

[1] "While the Princess Mathilde walked round the rooms (at a grand ball given by the Minister of the Marine) on the arm of the Grand Duke, Mme. Castiglione walked immediately behind her on the arm of a Russian prince. The Minister, Madame Hamelin, and the Princess's suite brought up the rear" (Viel-Castel, *Mémoirs*, Vol. III).

In many quarters she was looked upon as both eccentric and attractive. On first acquaintance, her audacity and her caprices were apt to astonish, shock, and occasionally irritate, those around her. After a time, however, her friends became used to her ways, and forgave them all.

In her repartees she sometimes went too far. Her tongue could never be governed by the laws of etiquette, whence it happened that she came perilously near being impertinent.

One night, about 1861, Prince Jérôme gave a reception at the Palais Royal in honour of the Empress, whom he publicly treated with the utmost deference, though privately he was by no means partial to her. Eugénie duly appeared at the party, dressed in blue tulle and wearing a wreath of Parma violets in her hair. Jérôme Napoleon led her round the drawing-rooms, holding her by the hand instead of offering his arm and preceding her a little as they walked, with an old-fashioned, stately courtesy which looked very chivalrous to the spectators.

A little after midnight the Emperor and Empress withdrew; as they walked down the stairs, they encountered Madame de Castiglione, who was hastening up.

"You come late, Countess," said Napoleon gallantly.

"It is rather you who leave early, Sire," replied she, and entered the ballroom holding her head high.

In her youth her education had been very casual, not to say neglected. No restraint had ever been placed on her waywardness. Her mother, the Marchioness Oldoïni, too solicitous perhaps of her beauty, had taken but little trouble to train her mind, or to bridle the temper and irritable nerves of the headstrong Nicchia. Spoiled on all sides, contact with the world left these characteristics unchanged. She gradually acquired the habit of speaking and acting exactly as her humour dictated, asking no outside opinions and permitting no check either on her mind or heart. Was she not sure in advance of a verdict

in her favour? Would not the men at any rate find excuses for her every whim? To win their indulgence she had a sure talisman.

Her independent bearing, the showy eccentricity of her toilettes, her evident self-satisfaction, the surpassing elegance of her person, the unexpected freaks in which she occasionally indulged—she would go any lengths to astound the gallery—alternately fascinated and annoyed her circle. Sometimes, at the very height of an entertainment, she would disappear from the eyes which watched her every movement; then after a short absence, during which every one asked, "What can have become of her?" she would return more brilliant than ever, more tantalizing and more winning, more victorious and more envied than before.

In her reputation for eccentricity, with less sense of propriety, she rivalled the Princess de Metternich. There was keen competition amongst newsmongers of the day to get hold of her sayings and doings; and as may be imagined, some of the stories in circulation lost nothing in the telling.

One such tale represents her as having received her friends in an apartment hung with funereal black, having clothed herself in transparent white, in order that her beauty might be seen in the highest possible relief.

One day, at a *tête-à-tête* tea-party with Nieuwerkerke, she announced her intention of climbing at midnight on the following day to the roof of the Louvre to hear all the bells of the city. It was Christmas Eve. She wished it—and it was done. But the story is worth telling.

She arrived early. They began by exchanging little bits of gossip about this person and that. Nieuwerkerke enjoyed this kind of talk, and while she nibbled sweet cakes, he whispered the latest scandals of the day in her ear, and then told a little story about the Empress, which had delighted the Court a day or two before. The Empress had gone to the exhibition. Stopping before

a statue of Modesty (*la Pudeur*), she criticized the marble and found fault with the proportions of the figure, especially with the narrowness of the shoulders. Nieuwerkerke defended the sculptor, saying that a young girl would naturally be less developed than a woman, and that this very lack of development was in keeping with the sentiment of modesty which the artist wished to depict. Thereupon the Empress, with her usual vivacity and her irresponsible way of speaking her mind, replied :—

"One can be very modest without being quite so narrow; I see no necessity for that."

No one smiled; but the Empress's naïve expression of her opinion and her obliviousness to the double meaning of her words taxed the self-control of the Court to the utmost. And Madame de Castiglione, who was not at the moment compelled to observe the same decorum of attitude, thoroughly enjoyed the tale.

But while they chatted they kept count of the time. Punctually at midnight Madame de Castiglione escorted by Nieuwerkerke wandered over the extensive roofs of the Louvre; and by the light of the moon the staff on duty at the Museum and the passers-by in the streets might, had they glanced up, have caught a glimpse of the lady and "His Majesty's Superintendent of Fine Arts."

Everything went with her by sudden and unexpected changes of front, as may be seen in the incident of the *tableaux vivants*.

The fashionable craze for living pictures appealed at once to her imagination and furnished her with opportunities for seeking after effects and exhibiting her faultless figure under the best of conditions. Of course she shone in them. Society learnt to look forward eagerly to her ever-fresh devices for laying aside conventions and giving the rein to her freaks. One night, however, she disappointed her public. At the beginning of 1867 the Baroness de Meyendorff arranged one of these entertainments at her

house in the Rue Barbet-du-Jouy, and secured the help of the most attractive women at Court. One after the other took her turn before an admiring roomful of spectators, each presenting some pleasing image.

It was left for Madame de Castiglione to give the apotheosis of the picturesque. All were agog with curiosity to see what extravaganza she would offer them, what marvels of scenic effect. At last she appeared. The company rubbed their eyes, doubting the evidence of their senses; could it be she in this austere setting? Madame de Castiglione in convent garb sitting in a hermit's cell as a Capucine? It was herself. Some piece of mischief, they supposed. The folds of the homespun were but the precursors of some glittering transformation. Not a bit of it. The spectators waited, but in vain. For that night at least they would get no more. Some were annoyed; many were disappointed. But not all. A letter written on January 7 by a gallant philosopher and Academician, Edme Caro, who had been captivated by a photograph of the *tableau*, shows that at least one person was not insensible to the charm of the penitential garb. Writing to a person constantly at the Court, in a charming and fanciful vein through which it is easy to see that he intended his madrigal for other eyes than those of his correspondent, he says:—

"It would be very good of you to let me know where I may send my thanks for the beautiful photograph[1] which you have been so kind as to hand on to me. What is the address of the mysterious nest which you described to me the other day in language which reminded me of Lamartine's lines:—

Semez, semez de narcisse et de rose
Le lit où la beauté repose.

[1] Long afterwards, in 1903, I came across a copy of the photograph which appears to have spoken so eloquently to the "grateful eyes" of the philosopher. It had not suffered much in the lapse of years, and was lying peacefully in a drawer among a number of other Castiglione relics belonging to the owner of Baromesnil.

COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE IN TABLEAUX VIVANTS—DRESSED AS A NUN

I know that the lovely nun lives at Passy, but I have completely forgotten the rest of the direction to which my grateful eyes would fain be turned. "CARO."

The physical superiority of which she was so conscious impelled her to commit many follies. A number of instances could be quoted to show her boundless vanity. Always careful to make the most of her perfections, she preserved the style of a goddess even for her doctor's examinations. No one was better qualified to speak on this subject than Dr. Arnal.[1]

On one occasion, at Havre, she fancied that she was going to be seriously ill. She wrote forthwith to this doctor, who enjoyed the confidence of the Emperor and Empress, asking him to come to her immediately. Dr. Arnal's affability was so great that he used to lend himself willingly to all her caprices; but he had a large practice both at Court and in Paris. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to start at once, and made so rapid a journey that he was in Havre by nine o'clock in the morning. He hastened at once to the Countess's hotel, expecting to find his patient much gratified by the prompt attention he had shown to her request. On this point, however, he was mistaken. He was asked to call later. He did so. The patient was still capricious, and the doctor must still wait: the Countess could not make up her mind to see him. Hour after hour the doctor was postponed, until he became seriously angry and threatened to return without seeing his patient.

At last he was admitted. By this time it was two o'clock in the afternoon. The spectacle that met his eyes took away his breath. Madame de Castiglione was lying on a bed heaped with laces and furs, in a room full of flowers; resplendent with jewels, diamonds sparkling

[1] Dr. Arnal, excellent man, had some peculiarities of his own, such as his way of doing his hair. He wore it combed forward in a loop fixed flat on his forehead.

in her hair, there she lay in state, dazzling in the pallor of fever. Languidly she held towards him her bare arm and allowed him to feel her pulse. Yet it is certain she had no wish to fascinate or seduce her doctor, a man no longer young, who in coming thus to see her had no idea of making a conquest; it was merely another instance of her fondness for pose, and to show herself in the character of an interesting patient came naturally into her programme. Ill as she was, she had spent endless time on the arrangement of the accessories, so that the effect might be perfect.

Whilst we are on the subject of the Countess's weaknesses, we may give the history of the *auto-da-fé* of which she was guilty in connexion with Paul Baudry's picture, a masterpiece to which she took a dislike.

She had asked this great artist, whose pictures of Venus were calculated to arouse jealousy in the goddesses of Veronese himself, to paint her lying on a couch in the attitude and nudity of Goya's Spanish Duchess. He consented the more eagerly because he had never before been inspired by such a model. The result was a lovely picture, delicately idealized. Madame de Castiglione was at first delighted, somewhat flattered, and wholly pleased. Later she seems to have had some misgivings—a futile jealousy, springing perchance from a closer comparison of the painting with the original. Had art indeed surpassed nature? Henceforth she had a rival in that marvellous piece of painted flesh. She decided to get rid of it. In a fit of jealousy she hacked the canvas to pieces with a knife and threw the pieces into the fire. So at least runs the story.

Yet this echo of contemporary gossip is not wholly convincing. All her life Madame de Castiglione preserved with lover-like fidelity pictures of herself, whether paintings, sketches, drawings, modellings—any kind of image which might recall to her memory the triumphs of the past.

As we have seen, Madame de Castiglione attached great importance to scenic surroundings, whether aiming at startling effects at state ceremonies, or merely seeking to surprise her friends under special circumstances, grave or gay, in her own private life. Absent or present, the public took a great deal of interest in her doings. Her slightest movement was sufficient to give rise to a host of anecdotes and comments. Items of this kind were constantly being circulated :—

"The lovely Countess has flown off. Let her rivals rejoice!"

"Madame de Castiglione returned six weeks ago. It is remarkable that she has done nothing as yet to get herself talked about."

"There is every reason to expect complications shortly in the boudoirs of ambitious beauties. Madame de Castiglione has just taken up her residence again in Paris."

All this seems very fantastic; but her sole concern was to be seen and admired. The appearance of the Countess de Castiglione in full dress, and especially in fancy dress, was a social event in Paris. We have evidence of this in the Exhibition of 1867, where her portrait was on view. The picture had aroused an extraordinary amount of interest at the salon of that year. It had become at once a landmark and a goal for all visitors. It was the picture of the year; the sensation of the moment. Crowds collected constantly before it; scarcely had one group moved away than another still larger took its place. Amongst the spectators there was a continual thrill of admiration.

Other great artists placed their talent at her disposal. She used to meet many, some of them at the Duc de Morny's, a house she enjoyed visiting for the freedom that reigned there. Cabanel, Gérôme, and many more whose names escape us, made much of her. "Do you want to see my arm?" she would inquire complacently; whereupon she

would throw back her lace sleeve and expose its beautiful outlines. Or perhaps her foot in its perfection of moulding would attract their admiration,[1] and then she would lift her skirts and display it to them. These were hours of radiance. At that time she stood, indeed, in the full ray of sunshine.

For Madame de Castiglione this period was without a parallel. England, Spain, Italy—she had visited them all. In no other capital had she found such brilliant fêtes, such bewildering balls. In Paris she seemed to bathe perpetually in the intoxication of her own beauty. Then she grew weary of it, as of everything else.

The sudden disappearances and reappearances of Cavour's fascinating friend, her daring whims, her notorious heresies against the canons of fashion of the day, aroused more curiosity than admiration. She had been born too beautiful. Her almost superhuman gift of flawless beauty would have sufficed in pagan Greece to have raised her to the dignity of a goddess, and altars would have been raised to her as to a sister of Cypris. In her actual surroundings, however, it brought her more bitterness than triumph, and the very humiliation which other women felt in comparing their own persons with her perfections tended to isolate her, and to change their first involuntary feeling of admiration to one of jealous aloofness.

"I have always been out of my element," she often said and wrote. "I am only at my ease and at my best in the company of my superiors, or in that of simple, candid souls who love me. When I went into society I was accused of being proud and haughty with my equals, or at least with those whom social conventions compelled me to treat as such. . . . I tried hard to bend my pride; I never

[1] Casts of Madame de Castiglione's hand and leg are now the property of M. Mario Tribone, of Genoa, and testify to the perfect moulding of the originals.

succeeded; for in spite of myself, the society of the men and women reputed distinguished and intelligent filled me with a weariness and disgust that came very near to contempt."

Thwarted in her ambitions, she ended by giving way to a boundless chagrin, which the public, ignorant of its origin, attributed to the overweening pride of a woman devoid of all loftiness of intellect.

3

The wane of excessive beauty—Madame de Castiglione withdraws from the scene—Her declining days—The last strange phase of the celebrated Florentine's existence—Anecdotes and letters—Romantic episodes—Her end—Her will—A legendary souvenir.

The most brilliant sun must set. In those last days of the Empire, Madame de Castiglione's influence was already on the wane, as were also the prestige of the throne, the confidence of the public and the Emperor's health. The conflict of feminine influences had outworn the caprices of Cæsar.

With the fall of the Empire, and the consequent dispersal of the Court, Madame de Castiglione felt herself terribly isolated.

The storm had scattered the brilliant and motley crowd which she had looked upon day by day. Those who a short time since had stood beside her beneath the dazzling light of imperial favour had vanished into the night.

A dark cloud hung over society. In this inelegant and busy world which had suddenly sprung into being there was no place for a Castiglione. Hitherto she had been able to weave her plots, to play at politics, to exercise her feminine wiles both directly and indirectly, to sweep her skirts in the halls of one ministry after another, sure

beforehand of her reception, armed as she was with the favour of the leader. For these new-comers, however, thrust into the highest places by a single turn of fortune's wheel, she was only an unimportant foreigner.

But she still possessed friends in high places. Thiers, like the Princes of the House of Orléans, had not forgotten Madame de Castiglione. The ex-favourite of the Tuileries was well received at the Place Saint-Georges. In the great man's correspondence there are many indications of his kindly attitude towards her. It was, however, nothing more than the pleasant courtesy of social intercourse.

Her ceaseless ambition to act on and through others, directly or indirectly, was now checked by the want of an outlet. No one knew her in the new Government. Monsieur Pinard at Florence and the President of the Republic at Versailles in 1871 may have occasionally borne witness to the fine perception, the diplomatic talents, the keen general intelligence, of which under the last regime she had given signal proofs. But could these gifts be further utilized? A democracy is not a fertile soil for undertakings based on a foundation of personal grace and beauty. She yearned for the restoration of a monarchy, the return of a splendid court, in which her place would be assured and her star once more in the ascendant.

For several years, during which she kept up close, friendly relations with the Orléans family, this was her fond hope. She mentions it in many a hasty note, in letters and daily conversations, with a friend and confidant, a staunch adherent of the Orleanist party. But from the Château d'Eu, near Dieppe, they either did nothing, or did the wrong thing.

Her last political illusions were of short duration.

"The fault is Theirs and Eu's.[1] The only true word is yours in my opinion."

[1] A graceful play on the words in the original: "C'est Eux et Eu qu'il nous faut accuser."

Whence bitterness, regret, even anger, plainly visible in her private correspondence. She included all princes of all denominations in her sweeping reproaches of inconsistency and ingratitude—those she had known erstwhile and those she had met more recently.

"Life's passions have brought me in contact with princes, and I have ever found among their followers (I speak of their true and loyal friends) some with whom I have been—if not in perfect harmony of mind—at least in communion on the question of Effort and Pity. And I must acknowledge that I have found good and true men who were neither courtiers, nor swimmers careful to go with the tide. They were neither more nor less obedient than myself. But as we would not humble ourselves, we preferred to retire. Then 'farewell calf, cow, pig, chickens!'[1] Down fell the princes, ruined by the follies of those whose counsels they had preferred. Thus have nations fallen into helpless disorder, as we see in France to-day."

The world generally looks up to those in high places. However highly placed the individual, she, on the contrary, looked down on him from above and judged him without mercy. "Life is the sum of false accounts," said a philosopher. Probably many such passed under her notice in the years she spent amongst the privileged class of rank and birth. She returns to the subject in a letter written to the same lifelong friend, years after the events which prompted the reflection.

"'Pearls may be hidden in hay,' you said on the stairs as you left. Crush the bundles of hay, and if you search among them you will find the famous Nicchia. That pearl is my heart, that heart is my pearl. . . . One tear of pity in answer to your call, a tear not of excuse, approval, or forgetfulness, but a tear for the unhappy man born a prince, but condemned to drag out his life in exile!

[1] Quoted from the Milkmaid in Lafontaine's fable, who counted her chickens before they were hatched.—*Translator's note.*

Doubly extenuating circumstances are here, since a prince remains ever a prince. In all my long career I have never found a word more full of meaning than this: trials both of head and heart; an experience of banners royal and imperial. The steps of a throne, whether ascended or descended, are inaccessible to love, duty, gratitude, friendship, privacy, remembrance, sometimes even to courage, honesty, truth, and invariably to frankness, uprightness, loyalty. Never any generosity, and no trust. Such are princes, whatever their race or their country."

In the days of her brilliant successes, the thoughts that haunted her pillow were less bitter. It is easy to discover her secret grief: she had only crossed the stage of history with a furtive and fleeting step; her dream was to have played a more enduring part.

Old age came sooner than she expected, placing its pitiless brand on what had been her glory, her power and her triumph. She had hoped, like Ninon, to triumph even in this, and to resist time's ravages to the end. She found herself losing little by little her abundant hair, her pearly teeth, the perfect contour of her face. . . . The wane of her beauty was rapid and obvious. It came, relentless and irremediable. The change in her was less graceful than in many women. I have seen a number of photographs taken at a relatively advanced period of her life, which she distributed with a very sparing hand. Looking at them, I could but sigh, alas! Then it was that she resolved to bury in a voluntary seclusion the disillusionments of the impenitent coquette. She shut herself up out of sight of all, jealously shunning the eyes of her friends. She could not bear the thought that every day must diminish her charms and disfigure her, the queen of yesterday, leaving her helpless to repair the ruin worked by time on the beauty which had been the wonder of her world; still worse to feel that men and women watched

THE COUNTESS DE CASTIGLIONE IN HER DECLINING DAYS

with ironical or cruel eyes its slow destruction. Those who seek to be forgotten, whether from regret of the past, from disenchantment or contempt, can very soon achieve their end. Occasionally a word, or an allusion to her, circulated in some newspaper or in conversation. Paris, now and then, recalled her name and her person. Then darkness and silence deepened.

We must point out, however, that this retirement was neither so early nor so complete as is generally supposed. She still kept some remains of youth after the events of 1871. Her beauty did not vanish in a breath; her statuesque figure did not immediately lose its outlines; nor did her humour become at once so morose as it ultimately was. Amongst fragments of letters scribbled in her illegible hand, I have come across invitations written to absent friends in a style as gay and bright as the following:— "7 o'clock in the morning.

"We waited for you until two in the morning, to sup, dance, and all the rest. By the way, if you would care to touch the very last diamonds of the crown, in print, a friend has lent me for a few hours a whole album of photographs, with some very curious details as to the special hunting-grounds of Napoleon III. Good-bye till Wednesday."

Or this, which is not without a certain laconic cheerfulness:—

"All roads lead to Paris, you say. Here I am. Come. With which I give a turn to my roast."

Her visits became more and more rare. She went no more into society. But she occasionally trifled furtively with its last temptations. I may give one very characteristic incident.

It occurred about fifteen years after the fall of the Empire. Madame Walewska, then Countess d'Alessandro by her second marriage, gave a party in her apartment in the Rue Washington. She was informed that a person

thickly muffled, who would not give any name, wished to speak to her. Wondering who it might be, she left the drawing-room and went to the hall, where she found the stranger, whom at first she failed to recognize.

"It is I, Nicchia," said a familiar voice. "I have brought you some flowers. Is not to-day your birthday?"

As she spoke Madame de Castiglione brought from under her black silk draperies a bouquet of superb roses, just freshly opened. The thanks she received were of the tenderest. The two women embraced each other.

"But," said the mistress of the house, "you surely were not going to run away without being seen? It would give great pleasure if I announced you."

"No, the time of such follies is over. I am only the shadow of the Castiglione."

"I do not believe it. Take off this double or treble veil and I can tell better."

The Countess Walewska managed to draw her into the next room. A vision of vanity passed before the eyes of Madame de Castiglione. Would she indeed recognize her old self in the mirror? She laid aside her heavy mantle. She wore a dress which, if not in the latest style, was not unbecoming, now that she had drawn off the scarves that hid her face and eyes. She arranged it with quick and busy fingers, opening it a little further, pinning it back. She was still herself!

"But you are lovely, very lovely—just as you were before, just as you always are!"

"Do you think so?"

"Of course, but waste no more time."

Madame Wálewska's absence had aroused a good deal of curiosity among her guests. The name of the unexpected visitor had somehow become known. All were impatient to see her again. The men slipped out of the reception-room to catch sight of her the sooner. She was greeted and congratulated on all sides. Had they won her

back to themselves? . . . That evening she was in her best mood.

Next morning, unfortunately, she relapsed into her former depression, which gradually became acute and morbid.

Her correspondence during this period, of which I possess some fragments, is intensely melancholy. Tears for a lost son; complaints of her disappointments; painful details; sudden distrust, or equally sudden fits of friendliness; sad comments on the fugitive nature of greatness; above all, constant laments over the importunity of some who persisted in intruding upon her privacy and paid her unwelcome compliments.

She soon refused to receive any but the few who remained her faithful friends.[1] No one dared to knock or ring at her door; all must announce themselves by giving a particular kind of whistle and certain signals, whereupon the door so firmly closed would open. The only person who might come as he chose, and as often as he chose, without announcing himself in any way, was General Estancelin. For him the little mechanism in the door operated quietly. He could slip at once into the house. The conversation would be taken up

[1] Saint-Amand was among these. I found a curious letter from the historian and diplomatist between the leaves of a book which had belonged to Madame de Castiglione.

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—The photograph is very like, that is, admirable. The tree of Versailles, full of poetry. The motto, very true: *The more I see of men the more I love dogs.*

"You are quite right. A beauty so ideal, a being so exceptional as the Countess de Castiglione, requires not men, nor even angels, and certainly not archangels, but dominions and thrones. I speak of course of heavenly thrones. Those of this world are too trivial.

"Do not read *The Women of Versailles.* It is neither original nor powerful. It is in my early style, and I do not want you to judge me by that book. I shall give you another which is less feeble, and which will make you think of the Prince Imperial and your son.

"Do not forget the date of January 9th.

"At your feet, SAINT-AMAND."

just where it had been left the day before, or the day before that. This went on through days and months. At Baromesnil Estancelin showed me a curious photograph of the silent house. The Countess is hiding behind the half-closed shutters—she seems to have heard the signal—and at the bottom of the picture may be read the following inscription, written by her own hand: "To my old friend, Estancelin, in remembrance of twenty-five years of whistling."

He told me he never met any one there, except on one occasion, when, without any warning, he found himself at the dinner-table in company of Cornély and two or three others. Perhaps sometimes she discreetly dismissed some exceptional caller, or even some more frequent guest, such as the Italian refugees whom she imprudently received. But with these she could recall the happy days when she had been the messenger of Cavour and Victor Emmanuel to Paris, to plead with passionate lips and all the fascination of her eyes the cause of Italy's freedom with Napoleon III. Strange ending to a story so brilliant and so triumphant!

In this last and little-known phase of her life there were curious and romantic episodes which fit in well enough with the reputation of this capricious woman, and also with her mania for surrounding herself and her doings with an atmosphere of mystery. A chapter in the style of Ponson du Terrail or Emile Richebourg might be written about the means she adopted some twenty-eight years ago to recover her jewels, which she had placed in a safe hiding-place at the outbreak of the Franco-German War. The casket had been carried to a distant part of Italy and deposited in a small Calabrian village of dramatic memory. The transaction had been made without any interchange of legal receipts, in fact without any formality whatever, either financial or official. A card had been cut in half, and one piece given to the upright and simple-

minded man to whom she entrusted her property, while the second, fitting the first exactly, she kept herself, on the understanding that the bearer of her half of the card would be authorized to demand the restitution of the jewels. The arrangement was faithfully adhered to. She entrusted its execution to a lawyer in whom she had great confidence. He undertook the journey. On his arrival at its end, after a tortuous and varied course, he had some difficulty in finding the place he sought. It was a strange-looking building, and its owners were even more peculiar. How attentively they listened to his explanations! What inquisitorial eyes they fixed on his countenance! He produced his half of the card. The other piece was brought out. The two matched perfectly. Then they consented to hand over to him the diamonds and pearls, which had been carefully hidden in the wall. Among them was the famous necklace of black and white pearls, in six rows, such as no empress had ever worn.

Madame de Castiglione owned several apartments in Paris, which she kept to the end of her life, though she never set foot inside them.[1] I have seen one of them, that in the Rue de Castiglione.

It was shut up for many years, like a reliquary containing the remains of some soul. In the dusty, dark house, where now are the workrooms of a fashionable dressmaker, there might have been seen an exquisite model of a child's arm, made in memory of the son she lost, whose name was Georges. It lay on a big blue cushion bordered by a thick gold cable with gold tassels at the four corners. There was nothing very remarkable about the place as regards decoration. The thing that struck me most was the common material used in the draperies, all of the shade of dull blue with which her room was lined, the

[1] These were in the Rue Cambon, the Rue de Castiglione, and at Batignolles; including her apartment in the Place Vendôme, they represented a yearly rental of 18,000 francs.

colour having probably been chosen for the purpose of softening the light. On the ceiling the folds of the stuff were caught together into a rosette in the centre. The dining-room was hung in the same way, but in old rose. The general effect was dark; the rooms, narrow and low, by no means suggested the idea of the soft, becoming nest of a coquette.

It was in an entresol of the Place Vendôme that she finally buried the remainder of her beauty, hiding her mourning from all eyes, including her own. Looking-glasses were rigidly banished. Shutters were closed night and day. The sunlight crept in through narrow openings in the blinds, and revealed only the depth of the darkness in which she lived. All the rooms were hung with dark colours, and were lighted at night by dim and darkened gas burners. A system of double doors and a total absence of bells rendered the place practically inaccessible.

As in her happier days a curious constancy of memory had led her to preserve with jealous care objects she had loved or apartments in which she had lived, so now her coachman had orders to keep her carriage always ready to leave the stable at a moment's notice. Coachman, carriage, and stable were never used, but the orders were strict. Sometimes at night, accompanied by her fat, ugly little dogs, she would slip out of the house in the Place Vendôme, dressed in sable garments and her face covered with a thick veil. The singular-looking figure in the flounced dress of former days would glide to the windows of an uninhabited house and gaze thoughtfully at its walls. This was Madame de Castiglione revisiting the apartment in which she had spent such radiant days, but she never summoned courage to cross its threshold.[1]

Her last years dragged themselves out in loneliness and

[1] The Place Vendôme and the Rue Castiglione, in which the closed apartment referred to was situated, are only a few yards apart.

distrust. She cut herself off even from her relations, acknowledging none of them. This is shown very clearly by her will, a rough draft of which I saw at Baromesnil in 1904. After naming the seven executors she had chosen to see that her last wishes were carried out without the intervention of any relatives, she had written in red pencil in large characters in the margin of the document :—

"No heirs. . . . No relations, either in France or Italy, although there are many complete strangers who bear the same name, Oldoïni, Rapallina, Lamporecchi, de Castiglione, Caspigliole, Asinari, Verasis. . . ."

She thus repudiated connexions who did in fact exist, as can be proved by the letter announcing the death of her husband, Count de Castiglione.[1] But already in life, as now in death, she had resolutely cut herself off from her family as from the rest of her world.

She asked only to be forgotten, absolutely once and for all. She strictly enjoined on her executors to see that no funeral procession, no flowers, letters, press notices, biographies, or reports in the papers, no announcement of any kind whatever, should betray the fact of her final passing into everlasting night. For thirty years she had

[1] In 1867. We discovered this document among our papers, and as it gives a list of the relatives and connexions of the Castiglione family we quote it as it stands :—

"Mme. la Comtesse Verasis de Castiglione, M. le Comte Georges Verasis de Castiglione, M. le Chevalier Clément Castiglione, Mme. la Comtesse Clément Castiglione *née* Litta, M. le Marquis Oldoïni, Ministre d'Italie en Bavière, Mme. la Marquise Oldoïni, M. le Général Cigala, Mme. la Comtesse Massimino, M. le Chevalier Jean Lamporecchi, M. le Chevalier Alexandre Lamporecchi, M. le Général La Rocca, Mme. la Comtesse La Rocca, M. le Marquis et Mme. la Marquise Spinola, Mme. la Comtesse veuve de La Villa, M. le Chevalier Henry Cigala, M. le Duc et Mme. la Duchesse de Valombrosa, M. le Marquis Emmanuel d'Azeglio, Ministre d'Italie en Angleterre, M. le Marquis Aynard Cavour,

"Have the honour to inform you of the sad loss which they have sustained in the death of M. François Verasis, Count de Castiglione, Chief Secretary and First Equerry of His Majesty the King of Italy, their husband, father, brother, brother-in-law, son-in-law, nephew, and cousin, who died at the Royal Castle of Stuppinigi, near Turin, May 30, 1867."

hidden from the public; she wished to preserve the same secrecy in death.

"I forbid the executors of my will and all other persons therein indicated to publish anything whatever to anybody whomsoever, whether legacies, souvenirs, letters, autographs, or portraits."

This continual dread of gossip, curiosity, or publicity around her, or even after her death, became a morbid mania with her. Nothing could be more significant than the following letter, the last she ever wrote:—[1]

"As ill as I can be, with no possibility of recovery We shall meet no more in this world. I have informed the Colonel (the Duc de Chartres), telling him how much I should like to see him. But he will not venture!

"Remember my instructions, and let them be carried out to the letter. What I want is a solitary funeral. No flowers, no church, no one at all. Understand this clearly. I would advise that nobody should be informed in Paris until after—the return.

"See that nothing is published about me. Any polemics started at this hour would find on her death-bed the woman who now implores you. After my death, if you have time, you will be obliged to revise your article. No, no; not thus.

"For the hundredth time (and this is my last wish) I implore you to send me back all my portraits, without exception—the eight proofs for which I have been asking for the last year.

"I am giving Cléry the same instructions as you, to save all pictures, collections, and books that might be seized and cause troublesome lawsuits.

"Adieu! One prayer—one tear, from Dieppe.

"CASTIGLIONE."

She was not mistaken in foreseeing a speedy termination of her illness. On November 28, 1899, she passed away

[1] To Monsieur Estancelin, November, 1899.

MADAME DE KORSAKOFF

in a bedroom in the Restaurant Voisin, whither she had emigrated, either from fear or from suspicion, and the last witness of her sad end wrote immediately to M. Louis Estancelin as follows :—

"DEAR SIR,—The poor Countess died last night from an attack of cerebral apoplexy with which she was seized on Sunday at two o'clock, aggravated by paralysis of the left side.

"She had seemed quite well only a few days before; but she had been a good deal worried about her mountain, and this no doubt helped to hasten her death. The whole, or part, of her mountain (her estates in Spezzia) were to have been sold, and for all I know the sale took place on Saturday.

"She passed away very quietly in the night, at half-past three. She had recognized me at eleven, and towards three her eyes were turned for the last time, I think, on those present.

"A sad and cruel end—none of us knowing what to do. Maître Cléry's secretary came and he was to have put the seals on the place this afternoon; but I do not know what has been arranged, Maître Cléry, who alone had received instructions, being in Venice. . . . "E. S."

Her burial-place was kept a secret. No monument was placed over her remains. A plain slab of granite marks the spot, and even that is now entirely neglected. I went to see it; it lies in a part of Père Lachaise which is still left wild. I found it quite devoid of ornaments or flowers. One plain and humble holly wreath alone relieved the bareness of the stone.

In her lifetime she astonished the world. When her day was done she still remained an enigma. Shortly before the end she sent to the care of Alphonse de Rothschild a casket bearing this inscription :—

"NOT TO BE OPENED IN THE EVENT OF DEATH."

Two sealed envelopes no less enigmatic were found amongst her property the day after her burial, and were simply entered in the inventory. The casket was subsequently opened by the judge of the civil court. It contained some private papers which he ordered to be burnt, and some documents bearing on the succession, which were handed over to her solicitor.

Once more, those who hoped for startling revelations were disappointed. The Italian police undertook to dispel the last illusion. That body has no mercy on posthumous exposures; it endeavours to destroy the smallest fragments of written evidence that might be left by persons exercising any degree of royal authority, and might be construed as bringing into contempt the powers that be. We have recently had a fresh proof of this in their action with regard to Crispi's papers, upon which they placed their seals, so that the statesman's daughter had to take very decided measures to defend her late father's property.

Biographers and historians in search of unpublished documents have cause to regret the destruction of Madame de Castiglione's papers. They would probably have found much to interest them. If they could but have got their hands into those dusty bundles, their practised noses would quickly have scented out the savoury morsels. Madame de Castiglione, although she wrote very badly (I speak from the material aspect), had exchanged letters with the highest personages in Europe. Pius IX, Victor Emmanuel, Napoleon, Cavour, Thiers, the Princes of Orléans, all had sent her autograph letters. In her favour diplomatists had departed from their official reserve. She had in her coffers some truly illuminating notes, almost state papers. . . . But the Castiglione correspondence was the subject of an organized pillage. Police with sharp eyes and nimble figures examined, destroyed, burned all that could be found, and this under

the very eyes of journalists who, eager for booty, had hastened to the spot, only to see their prey escape them and vanish in smoke.

We give here a passage from a letter written by one of the Countess's executors to her faithful friend in Normandy, which evidently alludes to this anxious ransacking of her papers by the Italian authorities:—

" . . . 1900.

"I have only to-day returned from Sicily. As I have been away from Paris for three weeks, I do not of course know what may have appeared in the newspapers; but I saw the Countess's solicitor two days before I left. He told me that the Italian Government had secured the right to administer the estate of Madame de Castiglione, and that the Embassy had immediately removed the seals and ransacked all papers. They found numbers of things written by her own hand, but most of them were utterly incomprehensible. All these were thrown into the fire, with a number of letters from unknown sources.

"Two days after the Court had pronounced its decision the Countess's heirs arrived to take possession of what was left of the estate. It did not amount to much, it appears. I know nothing of the person of whom you speak in your letter, Monsieur Tribone. I never even heard the Countess speak of him. Moreover, she always said she had no heirs; but her statements were often incorrect.

"Everything that she had accumulated in the apartment at Voisin's where she died has been rummaged; nothing very important was found. "Yours, etc., S——"

A few obstinate seekers continued to rake the ashes. Those who had been around her person were closely examined as to the most trivial details that had lingered in their memory. Nothing of a private character was ever discovered. Account-books scribbled by the governess,

Luisa Corsi, legal documents, fragments of letters without any particular interest, peculiar notes in the handwriting of humble folk, indicating that the queen of beauty, the divine Countess, had not disdained in her declining days the services or consolations, if we may say so, of her inferiors—in all, little, or rather nothing.[1] Of all her illustrious intimacies not a sign; one envelope without its contents, on which might be seen the imperial handwriting. The public had to content itself with poor leavings. The experts in journalism were compelled to fall back on such gleanings of news, and, for want of better "copy," to give the inventory of the sale which followed close upon the funeral, naming the more important items and others, such as the famous pearl necklace worth 422,000 francs—drawn by the Emperor of the French from his private banking account—a ball programme with the signature of Victor Emmanuel, and various heirlooms, trinkets, lace, china, which were all put up to auction.

Neither the destruction of her papers nor the resolute silence of those to whom she had imparted her impressions in those unhappy years has been able to diminish the interest which attaches to the person of Madame de Castiglione.

That curiosity, legitimate as it is, will possibly be quickened by this detailed sketch of her; for it cannot be denied that with her extraordinary fascination, her mysterious rôle, her ambition so much greater than her powers, her incomparable physical, if not moral, gifts, the eccentricities of all kinds distinguishing her to the very end of her life, the Countess de Castiglione, though not the superhuman creature some ecstatic admirers try to

[1] I have seen some collected by Monsieur Georges Montorgueil, and Monsieur Hanotaux showed me one morning a few words written on a yellow envelope in what looks like a servant's hand. After accounting for several commissions performed, written in a familiar style, the man winds up his epistle with "*bien le bonjour à Madame la Comtesse*," which seems a little odd over the plain signature of "Charles."

make her out to be, was yet one of those strange and rare beings whom one would hardly meet twice in a lifetime.

Every given period of history owns its particular type of seduction, and its legend. Amongst the women of her time Madame de Castiglione personified that legend and that charm.

However little effort one may have made to play a part or to rise above the crowd, there is no escape from the law of history; before this bar all are arraigned; willingly or unwillingly, we are all subject to the desire of mankind to examine everything in detail and judge by facts. The forgetfulness beyond the grave to which Madame de Castiglione aspired was not to serve as her winding-sheet, because she had enjoyed her hour of splendour and fame, and therefore she takes her place in the pageant of history.

CHAPTER II

A BONAPARTE

MADAME DE RUTE

The most complete incarnation possible of internationalism—Madame de Rute, *née* Bonaparte—What she was and what she would have liked to be—Singular circumstances of her marriage with the Count de Solms—Great stir in the world—Madame de Solms' difficulties with the authorities—Her imperial cousin signs the decree of banishment—In Italy—Happy years—A confidential letter treating of this phase of her life—From Milan to Turin—A strange evening at Madame de Solms'—She is soon to be called Madame de Rattazzi—Some details about the marriage: rumours and anecdotes—Victor Emmanuel and his minister's wife—Triumphal wedding trip—Ten years after—Her household in Paris as Madame de Rute—Originality and eccentricity—The moral attributes of this singular woman—Woman and artist.

FEW women have had a life so eventful, so filled to the last with conspicuous adventures, so chequered by alternate periods of influence and insignificance, futile efforts and abortive enterprises, as Marie Studhelmine Letizia, the grand-daughter of Lucien Bonaparte, known successively as Countess de Solms, Madame Urbain Rattazzi, and Madame de Rute; as cousin of Napoleon III, and fervent friend of the Republican Castelar; as artist, woman of the world, and of letters. French, Italian, and Spanish in turn, according to her successive marriages and moods; international, universal, consumed with desire to be in all places and to assimilate all notions, yet possessing actually nothing so precious as the remembrance of her own beauty and the successes it had brought her.

Under the Empire it was the fashion to be exotic. Now it is the proper thing to be cosmopolitan. But if any one can be said to embody the essence of the international

MADAME DE RUTE, NÉE BONAPARTE

idea, it is certainly Madame de Rute. Corsican by birth, she was French in sentiment by reason of her Bonapartist descent. For the English she was the daughter of the Irishman Thomas Wyse;[1] in Italy, where she was received with enthusiasm, she bore the glorious name of Rattazzi; for the Spanish she was a Rute; but in her thousand and one literary undertakings, in the *Nouvelle Revue Internationale*, which she edited, she emphasized her cosmopolitanism, reserving to herself the right on great occasions to remember that in blood, as in heart, she was a Frenchwoman. At the same time, whether in Rome, Aix-les-Bains, Paris, Madrid, or Lisbon, she proved herself to be above all else a woman of the world and a queen of society.

From her earliest youth she had attracted attention by her precocious knowledge, by her grace, thoughtfulness, intelligence, and rare decision of mind. She had, however, the hot blood, the spirit of her race, dominating and restless; its fiery imagination, its capricious and fantastic desires, its varied and far-reaching ambitions. To all these qualities she added a fearless impatience to live and to feel in every faculty of her being. The honour due to rank, the sovereignty of beauty, the glory which sits so well on youthful talent—were not all these hers by right? She longed to enter on the enjoyment of her advantages; and, happily for her, the opportunity presented itself without delay. It came in the person of the Count de Solms, who was generously inspired to give her a million francs in her marriage settlement.

The origin of this first marriage, of which many fables have been told, is worth recalling in detail. She was seventeen and still a mere Puritan schoolgirl, by no means skilled in the use of the weapons with which Nature had endowed her. One night she fell out with her mother over a ball dress, and in the heat of the moment

[1] Sir Thomas Wyse (1791–1862) married, 1821, Letizia, daughter of Lucien Bonaparte, who died in 1872.

that lady raised her hand and struck the girl's face. Indignant and resentful, she vowed to stay no longer in tutelage, but to take any means that offered to escape from the parental yoke. The first wealthy and eligible man she met was Count Frédéric de Solms, and she captured him at once. He was neither young nor handsome, and of dubious birth and title, but not for a moment did she consider those details; she made up her mind to have him, and would accept no other husband. She compelled her parents to give her this world-weary and *blasé* man, who proved far from an ideal husband. She very quickly consoled herself for her matrimonial failure, however, and plunged madly into social gaieties, giving herself no time to remember her husband's existence. Soon she had gathered round her in her drawing-rooms in the Rue Caumartin, and later in the Rue de Milan, a brilliant and devoted circle of friends. Count Alexis de Pommereu, both in the absence and presence of Monsieur de Solms, helped her to do the honours of her parties. This gentleman was by no means a negligible quantity in Paris society at that time. He was the grandson of a French peer, the Marquis d'Aligre, formerly attached to the person of Queen Hortense in the character of chamberlain. Devoted to his hostess, he stood as godfather to her first child. He was the friend of the family, sharing in its present munificence, which he endeavoured to enlarge in the future by bequeathing to her his fabulous wealth, thereby involving her after his death in a series of interminable lawsuits.

Already she had earned a universal reputation. All the world spoke of her sparkling and incisive wit. She passed for an excellent musician, sang very pleasantly, and acted admirably in plays written by herself. But her talents by no means ended there. She rivalled Madame de Mirbel in the delicate art of miniature painting, and her admirers went so far as to say that she would have equalled

Meissonier in genre painting had she chosen to exert herself. As for her person, so queenly was her bearing and so dignified her movements that it seemed a pity there was no available throne to offer her.

Madame de Solms was much discussed—too much, in fact, to please the Prince President. "My pretty cousin," said Napoleon, "is the perfection of all the virtues. She has them all—the good and the bad." He added, not without malice, that she played charmingly with a fan, but unfortunately also with the pen, and that she went so far as to commit herself to poetry, which was pardonable; but she also got herself talked about, which was more serious.

The salon of Madame de Solms, partly literary and partly political, had a militant tone which was highly displeasing at head-quarters. She made no secret of the fact that she welcomed there certain persons well known to be hostile to the new Government. The Minister of Police, Monsieur de Maupas, thought himself called upon to interfere, and sent her an invitation, which was tantamount to an order, to appear before him. In spite of the deviations in her family line, she had inherited from her illustrious ancestor a fund of obstinacy and a militant spirit. Indignant that a Maupas should take such a liberty with the great-niece of a Napoleon, she dashed off a characteristic epistle informing him that the "Princess de Solms" had no wish to make his acquaintance. The minister was tactless enough to insist. Lucien Bonaparte's grand-daughter was imprudent enough to retort with fresh bravado. A writ of banishment arrived, with five days' grace. She appealed against it. Her imperial cousin signed the decree. Her husband refused to uphold her. Her determination was only the stronger. She refused to leave her room and her bed. Before the writ could be put in execution the police were compelled to intervene and almost to resort to force. She was then escorted across the frontier. A few days later Madame de Solms brought an action against the

minister, employing Berryer as her counsel, brought all her guns to bear in court, was defeated without appeal, and proceeded to proclaim herself a victim of persecution.

After this friction with the imperial police she took to writing letters to the newspapers. She wrote with an ingenuous modesty, which reads very curiously to-day, to the effect that she is an unassuming woman who considers obscurity the only happy lot for her sex. . . . Happy in her home, with her child and her studies, her one ambition was to keep her many friends, to continue to wield the sceptre in her own elegant salon, and to be forgotten by a family which she esteemed too little to be able to love. The honour of a melancholy celebrity had been forced upon her. Alas! she had now grown accustomed to it, and she bore it so well that her enemies were ready to declare that her first object in life was to get herself talked about.

She spent the days of her exile, like some noble lady of the Renaissance, in her villa at Aix-les-Bains, in an atmosphere of luxury, dividing her time between pleasure and work, spiritual fervour and physical delight, which kept her in a condition of beatification. The Peace of Villafranca made it possible for her to return to France, as she chose to consider herself "annexed" to the empire with the province of Savoy, in which her villa was placed.

The Court, the Emperor, and the entire tribe of the Bonapartes were annoyed because she persisted in using the family name. They refused to recognize her right to the title of princess, but it was more difficult to refuse her the heritage of her beauty. Ponsard calls her the enchantress, and report says he was well qualified to judge; for the poet of *Lucrèce* had gone down into the gardens of Armida and had slept beneath the roses like Tasso's hero. Victor Hugo found no blossoms too sweetly perfumed, and no metaphors brilliant enough when he tuned his lyre in praise of her. According to the impassioned

language of the poet, titles, rank, honours were valueless to her: had she not already the distinction of the flower, the privilege of the star? Was she not spirit, soul, flame, and light incarnate? "She of the family of the Emperor? A great thing truly, for a child of the Sun!" And Eugène Sue exclaimed: "Yes, she indeed is a real princess!"

She had every reason, therefore, to be satisfied with fate and with her life, and no less with her person and her talents. She had not yet passed her thirtieth year. A long career of liberty opened out before her capricious fancy. Those were the happy days when she could draw a full-length picture of herself as seen in her mirror, and send it in the form of this curious letter to a young French friend, paying, like herself, a passing visit to Milan:—

"Milan, March, 1860.

"I was greatly touched, my dear d'Ideville, by your kind and affectionate remembrance. I thought when once you were back in Turin you would, with the carelessness I have sometimes noticed in you, forget me altogether. I must confess that it hurt me a little to think so. Thank you, then, for the pleasant surprise you have given me, and believe that I am really grateful for this beginning of friendship you are so good as to feel for me. I am less difficult to know than you imagine. I have a kind heart and a quick wit, but I am headstrong and clumsy about everything. I am frank, chiefly because it would be tiresome to me to take the trouble to be hypocritical; loyal from pride; decided in action and in friendship from selfishness. I am good, because up to a certain point this lends one grace the more to a woman, and I am anxious to remain feminine, notwithstanding my blue stockings. I am not inoffensive, because that would involve deceit, for I am not sufficiently religious to forgive, or even to forget, an injury. In short, I have great virtues and great defects; putting modesty aside, I think, however, that the former are greater than the latter. Amongst my virtues I boast a determination

never to be, and still less never to appear, perfect. I have no common sense, but I have a reliable character. I have no affectation, and can therefore not tolerate it in others. To conclude my picture of myself, as I see myself, I am the best of friends, an honest man, but an impossible woman, and a wife I would not wish to my worst enemy. You see I am sincere. It is fine, is it not!

"And now, as I have exhausted myself as a subject, both for the present and for the future, let us speak about you. I made them point out Mademoiselle —— to me. She is as pretty as only those women dare to be. To me her virtue appeared more questionable than her beauty. It is said, with a good deal of probability, I must confess, that your friend —— convinced himself on both points while he was at Milan. The wretch! that explains his not coming to the *veglione*. Do not talk to me; I dare say he did want to sleep: your ideal dream probably served as his pillow. But I am forgetting two things—first, that I have no wish to laugh at you; and secondly, that I constantly forget my mother-in-law's last advice to me on the day of my marriage. She was a woman of intelligence, and this was her counsel, given in a whisper: 'Be good, my child, if you can; but, whatever happens, always see that there are bolts on your door, and never write a word.' I have always done exactly the opposite. Suspicion is impossible to me, and calculation odious; besides, when I am forty, or whenever I like, I shall still be clever enough —and sufficiently *grande dame*—to win forgiveness from God and men for all the eccentricities of my youth and the flightiness of my mind. Do you not agree, my new friend? But this is a very long letter, and one which decidedly threatens to turn into a profession of faith. I hasten to leave you, and beg you to skip over all my nonsense and read only the last line, which contains my best sympathies.

"MARIE BONAPARTE-WYSE DE SOLMS."

The following year the young secretary of the Embassy, to whom Lucien Bonaparte's grand-daughter thus poured out her soul, had the satisfaction of meeting the amiable Princess again at Turin. The details of this visit and the impressions it left upon him are described in a racy account, of which we give a faithful summary.

The Countess de Solms sent him a short note, asking him to call on her the same evening at nine o'clock. She was staying at the Hôtel Feder. He went after dinner, and was ushered in. Madame de Solms was in a smart *déshabillé*, particularly becoming to the slight negligence of her person, which betrayed the indolence of her Italian blood.

"I have just come from Paris," she began by saying; "all is settled and arranged between the Emperor and myself. He has acted very generously, and quite in a cousinly way. Henceforth you can see me without danger; I am no longer the enemy of your Government as I was at Milan. *I am no longer contraband!* I set out at once to discover how things were going, and to get some particulars about my future brother-in-law and my old friend, General Turr. This marriage does not altogether please me, however!"

They had not been chatting very long when a tap at the door was heard, and there entered Count Cibrario, Grand Chancellor of the Orders of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, ex-minister, senator, scientist, and, in addition, with a weakness for literature, philosophy and madrigals. He was a notorious gallant, and was clearly put out at not finding the lady of the house alone. To be one of three was bad enough, but just as he was getting over his disappointment he was further incensed to see a fourth—and what a fourth! It was no other than the impetuous mouthpiece of the Piedmont Left, the celebrated deputy, orator, and poet, Brofferio, who, quick to perceive the effect his arrival had produced on the elderly statesman,

began by congratulating him playfully on the fortunate chance which had brought them together under the roof of this literary lady. He was about to put an end to the joke by taking his leave, when a light tapping at the door by a discreet and familiar hand announced the arrival of a fifth member of the party. Madame de Solms had not heard. "Come in," cried Brofferio in his loud voice. This time the thin figure of Rattazzi glided into the room. Clearly they were none of them in luck that night, least of all Commandant Urbain, who, as he climbed the stairs of the hotel, had been looking forward to the prospect of a pleasant *tête-à-tête*, and found himself, after all, in the middle of an animated conversation. His vexation was plainly written on his sulky countenance. Whilst Cibrario slipped out of the room, the malicious Brofferio settled himself comfortably in his easy-chair, and putting down the hat he had been holding in his hand, said with a mischievous smile:—

"I should not like to give my President the pleasure, or the pain, of seeing me retire at his approach, so I will stay a little longer, Countess, if you will allow me. It is a very long time since Monsieur Rattazzi and I have exchanged a word except from the benches of the Tribune; and, God knows, my President never speaks to me except to call me to order. In your house, dear lady, we meet as equals, on neutral ground. Is it not so, President?"

This raillery was not calculated to console Rattazzi for his disappointment. He too would have liked to beat a retreat, if a still stronger force had not irresistibly drawn him to the side of the hostess. He sighed, took a seat, and turning to the secretary of the French Legation, started a conversation on the internal and foreign policy of the sister nation. They mentioned Benedetti, who had just been appointed ambassador. Rattazzi announced his intention of calling shortly on the new French minister. "Ah, there is our President," said the member of the

Opposition, "preparing to pay court to France. Here, and to-night, I can understand it," he added gallantly, casting a glance at Madame de Solms; "but elsewhere I do not approve of it." Rattazzi, we may remark in passing, proved himself no mean politician, for a few months after this interview he had reason to thank Benedetti for the same portfolio which he lost immediately after Aspromonte.

Just now, however, the amorous President was in an agony. Brofferio at last got up and left. D'Ideville was about to follow his example, and had already reached the door. The statesman's face lighted. His happiness was short-lived! Madame de Solms, cruel and coquettish, made a sign to her French visitor to remain; and much against his will, that gentleman found himself forced into the position of a watch-dog, destined to spoil the *tête-à-tête* of his friend. Half an hour went by. Again d'Ideville rose to take leave. Again the capricious lady insisted on his remaining.

"Rattazzi," he tells us, "sitting on the sofa near Madame de Solms, watched her silently. A flower-stand was between us two. To break the silence, I picked up a French newspaper, which the fair traveller had brought from Paris, and began to read aloud an article from it. Every time I glanced across the sheet I saw in the shadow near the Countess's shoulder the outline of a hand and arm, which vanished furtively whenever I paused in my reading. I could not resist the fun of watching Rattazzi's confusion and his haste to cover up his too familiar movement with an ingenuous bashfulness charming to behold."

The evening wore slowly away. The conversation dragged painfully, no one knowing on what peg to hang it. D'Ideville took infinite pains to keep it alive, but without success, until he bethought himself of a confession album, in which he used to jot down the replies made by friends and acquaintances. As in the present day,

these books contained a list of questions as to the tastes of the victim of this cross-examination. The answers were written on the same page as the questions; they were commented on with much interest, and the time passed pleasantly enough at the game. D'Ideville presented his little volume to the clever woman, and also to the superior man whose meeting he had so innocently spoiled; and as chance would have it, both set down in the album their leading characteristics and betrayed their secret inclinations. Why not print this little catechism, which possesses the rare advantage of having called forth almost sincere avowals? Here it is, just as it stands:—

Questions.	*Madame de Solms's replies.*	*Rattazzi's replies.*
Who is your favourite poet?	Hugo.	——
Prose writer?	George Sand.	Thiers.
Painter?	Titian, Delacroix.	Raphael.
Occupation?	Writing.	Doing nothing.
Amusement?	Acting plays.	——
Passion?	Inspiring one.	——
Country?	France.	My own country.
Form of government?	The Republic.	Genuine constitutional.
Disposition?	A passionate one.	A gentle one.
Sensation?	An avowal.	——
Virtue?	Heroism.	——
Which vice do you most dislike?	Hypocrisy.	Hypocrisy.
		——
Your favourite character?	Cæsar, Garibaldi.	Napoleon.
Book?	*La Nouvelle Héloïse*	——
Your strongest wishes?	Always to be well, to be able to love without fatigue, and never to grow old.	——

The strange evening ended at last; it had not been lucky for Commandant Urbain, who, some time before, had declared his passion to the wayward Countess, *née* Princess,

THE DUCHESS DE BASSANO, LADY IN WAITING TO THE EMPRESS

whom he adored in her threefold capacity as a clever and beautiful woman, a liberal thinker, and the cousin of Napoleon III. Eventually his perseverance found a better reward. A few months later, d'Ideville continues, after his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he laid his portfolio at the feet of Madame de Solms. He, the clear-sighted and experienced statesman, consulted her constantly, and in his love for her deluded himself into the belief that in receiving the confidences of the turbulent Princess he was obtaining an insight into the most secret councils of the Tuileries!

Times have changed. She is no longer Madame de Solms. In the same way that she would at a moment's notice undertake a journey south in search of new sensations, so she now suddenly changed her name and nationality to marry the greatest statesman of modern Italy—after Cavour—Urbain Rattazzi. The affair was settled very quickly. Poor Monsieur de Solms, who had gradually merged into an almost legendary personage, and whose existence in fact was doubted by many, had died very conveniently at Turin. He had just had time to spend five or six weeks with his wife, as if to justify the social tie between them, and had then discreetly passed away. A fortnight after his death the impulsive Princess had received the nuptial benediction at midnight in the church of St. Philippe in the presence of a small number of friends. For the edification of the town photographs were exhibited for sale at all the fancy shops, in which Rattazzi, blazing with orders, attired in a black coat and white tie, was represented with the widow of Monsieur de Solms on his arm, leaning conjugally towards him, clad in bridal white, her head covered by a long veil.

His gallant Majesty King Victor Emmanuel, who boasted of having been beforehand with his minister in the good graces of Madame de Solms, had not attempted to place any obstacles in the way of her lawful union. On

the contrary, he made a generous contribution to her dowry in the shape of a jewel worthy of a queen, which he had taken from the crown diamonds.

It will readily be imagined that this marriage gave rise to a great deal of gossip. Some years ago Madame Walewska repeated to me a piquant conversation which she had had with Victor Emmanuel on the subject.

It happened at Florence. The sovereign, not without reluctance (for he avoided as much as possible all more or less representative functions and dinners), had accepted an invitation to a semi-official ball. At supper, Madame de Walewska was placed on the King's left hand. She noticed that he scarcely touched any of the dishes that were placed before him.

"Sire, you have very little appetite to-night," she observed.

"That often happens," he replied, "and these state dinners do not improve it much. But pray, Countess, do not let that affect yours."

"Indeed, Sire, when I see you eating nothing, I feel my appetite deserting me too."

"You must not follow so bad an example. Use your pretty white teeth and do not trouble about your grumpy neighbour."

The conversation, started on the topic of food, passed on to more important subjects. The whole of the new Government, with Rattazzi as Prime Minister, was seated in a row on the further side of the table. All had been nominated the evening before. Countess Walewska was very much interested, because her relative, Baron Ricasoli, a cousin of her mother the Marchioness de Ricci, had lost his office. Therefore she remarked—

"You thought well, Sire, to change your ministers?"

"Yes indeed. But I regretted it on account of your cousin. However, it must be confessed that neither these, nor the others, are of the first water. I know Ricasoli

is called a man of iron; but it does not follow that he has as much perspicacity as determination, or the initiative power necessary under the circumstances. Here was a ministry that announced to me every day some fresh difficulty, or some new danger, but never could suggest a way to avert it; they saw only the evil, but never a remedy. What was the use, then, of having ministers? Now I am in the hands of Rattazzi and the Liberals."

"That reminds me, his marriage is still talked about in Florence; it is even a good deal commented on. I dare not question you, Sire, on the subject. You perhaps have reasons for being specially discreet on account of Madame Rattazzi."

"Ah! Oh, yes, she is a capital woman! But her husband is a strange man! Can you believe that he came to ask my opinion about her? He said he had heard reports which made him a little anxious. He wanted to find out what I thought about her. I said, 'Really, I have heard nothing; I am wholly in ignorance, and it is dangerous to express an opinion on a subject of which you know nothing.' 'Certainly, but they couple your name with hers, Sire, and even insinuate . . .' 'Oh, I have no very distinct recollections about that. Frankly, my dear Rattazzi, I do not remember anything about it.' But what do you think of a man who does his best to make me confess that his wife may have been my mistress?"

The King burst out laughing, while Urbain Rattazzi, seated opposite, smiled at the sudden gaiety of his sovereign, without the smallest misgiving that he himself was the cause of it.

Italy warmly welcomed the Prime Minister's wife, and the whole route of their wedding journey was strewn with flowers. When, in 1867, Madame Rattazzi passed through Naples, she might have been excused for thinking she had fallen into fairyland. At the Royal Theatre, when she appeared in her box, the eagerness of the spectators to see

her was so great that the piece was interrupted. The highest society in Naples gave a banquet in her honour, at which she replied in Italian to their enthusiastic toasts. Her ascent of Vesuvius assumed the aspect of an apotheosis. All the population turned out to see her pass; and from the valley to the summit of the mountain, peasants, posted all along the route, illuminated the scene with lighted torches, until Vesuvius was seen through a general illumination, while from the heart of the mountain came the rumble of volcanic thunder.

She had reached her zenith. These were the brightest days of her life.

Ten years passed. A Spanish passion had taken the place of her Italian flame. She was now married to Monsieur Louis de Rute, late Secretary of State and deputy at the Cortès. She still led the same full life; still played her conspicuous part, and entertained largely; but it was noticeable that the eclecticism which had always distinguished her salon had widened to extreme complacency. Formerly, to obtain an invitation from her required a well-known name or a recognized talent. Now scarcely any credentials were necessary. Either from indifference, or from weariness, she took less trouble in choosing her friends. A dash of eccentricity was noticeable about her which supplied plenty of food for hostile comment. She was no longer at the meridian, as we said of Madame de Castiglione. Her ascendency was waning.

Could anything be more singular than the setting and the ceremonial at her special dinners in the Rue Logelbach?

Her visiting list was so large that she never remembered very clearly whom she had invited. She was exceedingly hospitable, and always kept open house. What matter how many came! Thirty would perhaps be the number decided upon. Fifty would come. The name-cards placed on the sparkling crystal were in danger of getting oddly

mixed, and the menu threatened to give out. Still, room must be found somehow. But under what extraordinary limitations of space! One such occasion I remember as if it were yesterday. Madame de Rute had taken it into her head to have the dinner-table removed bodily into the drawing-room, so that the diners might see the second batch of guests arrive, and these guests might have the pleasure of contemplating the diners. In the middle of her drawing-room, therefore, she had a kind of case put up, forming a large enclosure of glass, with an opening on each of its four sides. Inside this glass screen was the dinner-table and the party privileged to sit at it. Outside were the guests belonging to the second batch. As the dinners usually began very late, and lasted far beyond the customary hour of dinner-parties, it invariably happened that the late-comers had the empty satisfaction of witnessing a feast and hearing conversation in which they were not permitted to take part.

As time went on her household arrangements and her friendships became more and more equivocal. Her income became more variable and her funds less secure. After M. de Rute's death she had insisted upon acting as her own steward, and endeavoured to protect herself against the depredations of her servants by fiercely defending her own interests. Soon, however, her native carelessness got the better of her resolution. Once more the current flowed out, but the programme and the character of her parties quickly betrayed a change. As her personal prestige diminished, she forfeited the esteem of her circle. An atmosphere of irony and raillery prevailed around the whimsical Princess, of which she remained serenely unconscious, her short-sighted eyes seeing only the radiance of former days.

Madame de Rute never could or would grow old. The lustre of her last years, dimmed by equivocal incidents and

vexatious lawsuits, was merely an artificial reproduction of her brilliant youth.

She was constantly to be seen in her drawing-rooms in the Boulevard Poissonnière, the folding doors thrown wide open, receiving her guests, gay and sparkling, wearing her diamonds and cameos, her face covered with the virginal pink and white which Art has invented to hide the ravages of Time, her hair loose and flowing, with one crimson rose in "its silky snows." She remained faithful to the last to the unchanging ideal of her Italian soul: to embody in her own person all the splendour which a woman's rôle can yield—a combination of beauty, wit, and luxury. She made a brave stand against the fatal advance of Time. She never missed a "first night" or a "varnishing day," nor a single smart assemblage at which all the guests bore well-known names. She only laid down her arms to inexorable fate.

Was she really a "character," as in his sincere admiration, and influenced by his adoptive ties, it pleased a certain journalist to describe her? The statement cannot be made without reserve. She was too mobile, too changeable, too easily carried from one extreme to another in her acts and in her impulses. Inexplicable freaks, extravagant humours, alternate with her happiest inspirations. Innumerable anecdotes—possibly also innumerable calumnies—could be told of her whom Alphonse Karr, from her love of bustle and sudden caprice, called the Princess Brouhaha! She was intense in everything—in her friendships and her antipathies, but especially in the latter. The lengths to which she would go to satisfy some of her feminine enmities, and the publicity she gave to them, are still fresh in our minds. At heart she was both kind and good-natured. She had a great gift for admiration. Those who aroused this feeling in her artist-soul were lauded to the skies. Extremely sensitive to praise and disdainful of blame, she took her way—the showy and restless way she had chosen

—fully conscious of her long successes and of her actual talent.

We should be doing her injustice if we lost sight of the fact that, notwithstanding her passion for society, she also possessed a feverish love of work, which took such forms of literature and art as conduce to superficial effect and notoriety.[1]

Madame de Rute left upwards of fifty volumes. Poetry, novels, history, politics, stories of travel, plays, translations, fragments of autobiography, all occupied her pen at various periods of her existence.

As a poet her lyrical talent did not lift her above the horizon. As a novelist she showed gleams of intense sensibility. She related pleasing narratives of her wanderings across Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Holland, but never achieved any of the picturesqueness of description, the subtlety and depth of thought, or the spontaneous charm of sentiment characteristic of a great writer. In criticism her Muse was noble and enthusiastic. She showed but little discrimination, and extolled as masterpieces works poor in inspiration, which her eyes saw through the glamour of friendship.

In short, she clothed her thoughts with as little taste as her person, which, late in life, she tried to rejuvenate without that subtle discernment which should always guide

[1] Madame de Rattazzi interested herself in many things—too many, according to some sceptical and carping critics. Malicious people whispered that her successes in literature, music and sculpture were largely due to the assistance of others.

The Orientalist, Jules Oppert, noticed a young child at one of her parties, and inquired to whom the gentle little creature belonged and why it had not been sent to bed. "It belongs to Madame Rattazzi," he was told. For an instant he was silent—calculating, comparing, reflecting. Then, leaning towards me, he whispered in my ear, "After all, it is quite possible; she gets people to write her music and her articles, and to carve her statuettes; she is quite capable of getting some one to have children for her." Witty people are terrible. As a matter of fact, Madame Rattazzi had given incontestable proofs of her tenderness, by taking upon herself to nurse her rather belated offspring.

the use of artificial methods. None of the many pages written by her rapid fingers ever obtained more than a short-lived and limited popularity.

It is possible that a better fate may be in store for her memoirs. They offer considerable interest by reason of her long-sustained relations with various eminent persons, while they satisfy the reader's curiosity as to the woman herself; for she must have known this subject thoroughly, to judge from the time and attention she bestowed on her own doings, thoughts and passions, and the constant pains she was at to keep her person, work, interests and attachments before the public eye, although she was not always convincing.

Out of all this how much will remain? Only the memory of a fine mental activity.

In truth, Madame de Rute was not a second Madame de Stael, as some of her admirers would have us believe. She seems to have passed through life a very energetic and active figure, always in full view, but easily forgotten. It will be remembered of her that for a long time her house was the rendezvous of fashion and talent. The chroniclers of society will keep a place in their portrait gallery for the original and picturesque figure of this woman, who had such an intense curiosity about life.

LAURE DE ROTHSCHILD

CHAPTER III

PRINCESS MATHILDE AND HER FRIENDS

Armorial bearings of Mathilde Napoleon—Her childhood—Under the trees of Arenenberg—Unpublished letters of Queen Hortense—The truth about Mathilde's feeling for Louis Napoleon—After the Strasburg affair—Mathilde recalled by her father, King Jérôme—Her suitors—She becomes Princess Demidoff—Another aspect of this wealthy alliance—Scene of violent jealousy at a ball—The Emperor of Russia signs the decree of separation—Princess Mathilde at Louis Philippe's Court—After the Revolution of 1848—Mathilde as a link under the Republic and at the beginning of the Empire—Her star at its zenith—It wanes on the advent of an Empress—Mathilde's relations with Eugénie de Montijo—Private dissensions among the Bonapartes—Her opinions opposed to the Emperor's—Family quarrels—Mathilde, raised to the dignity of Imperial Highness, opens the doors of her house still more widely—Her brilliancy—Exceptional in splendour and duration—In Paris—Her house at Saint Gratien—Her hospitality—The pastimes of the Mathildian Academy—Portraits and anecdotes of some of her adherents—Nieuwerkerke—Eudore Soulié—Viel-Castel and his "black books"—The Goncourts—The Giraud dynasty; a pleasing picture of home-life—Abbé Coquereau; a prelate's manner of speech—Théophile Gautier and his conversational fireworks—Mérimée—Sainte-Beuve — Princess Julie's notebook — How Sainte-Beuve was regarded at Princess Mathilde's—Mathilde's great affection for the illustrious critic—How she dined with Sainte-Beuve—Sudden quarrel—A reconciliation *in extremis*—Other guests—Table talk—On love—Mathilde's dearest friends—One of them: Count de Nieuwerkerke again—After the war—Thirty years of artistic and social sovereignty.

FEW princely figures can boast such diversity of aspect as that of Princess Mathilde, and few have been associated with such a varied succession of men and events. Her descent from the Napoleons and the position she occupied, both at Court and outside it, during that period of imperial triumph; the exceptional circumstances which caused her to rank as daughter of a king of Westphalia, grand-daughter of a king of Würtemberg, niece and grand-niece of two emperors

—Napoleon I and the Tsar Paul—and cousin of a third, with the addition of a curious graft in a direct line from the Royal House of England; the irony of events which placed two crowns within her reach, yet never allowed her to wear one; her independence of character and originality which sometimes bordered upon eccentricity; her rôle as patron of the arts, in which she appears like one of the noble ladies of the Italian Renaissance, surrounded by a kind of Decameron of writers, artists, and distinguished men; her dilettantism and her natural gifts, so cultivated that she wielded pen or brush with equal skill; the unrivalled intellectual brilliancy of her receptions both in Paris and at Saint Gratien, her favourite place of residence; other elements which awoke interest and curiosity as being combined in one personality—does not the sum of all these things account for the eagerness with which society strove to obtain access to this woman, to know, and to discuss her?

Brought up by that admirable woman Catherine de Würtemberg, who preferred imprisonment in the castle of Elvangen to the bitterness of separation, Princess Mathilde came near to being more than a queen.

It was during her visit to the Castle of Arenenberg, upon Lake Constance, where she enjoyed the hospitality of the sentimental Hortense. Having lost her throne, the ex-Queen still reigned over the hearts of a few faithful friends, and had not given up the ambitious hopes of her family.

Mathilde's youth and her beauty, which had been notable even in Florence, now expanded and developed in the close vicinity of the intense ardour and ambitious projects of a prince-adventurer—her cousin Louis. Together with his elder brother, whose premature death was soon to clear the way for his bold designs, this young man had fought in the Romagna for the independence of a subject people. With an inconsistency peculiar to the

Bonapartes, he now strove with all his might to establish in the name of democracy an imperial dictatorship. Since the death of the Duke of Reichstadt, who had disappeared like a shadowy phantom from the scene, a few of Louis Napoleon's associates had grown to share his faith in his family star, and to believe that the young man would restore the name and power of the great Emperor.

Mathilde was probably far from sharing this illusion ; but the pensive youth who sought to reconcile so many conflicting ideals, who pondered on the inequality of social conditions and yearned to extirpate pauperism, while at the same time nursing a fond hope that he might yet wield a paramount authority centred in the pomp and luxury of a magnificent court—this enigmatic cousin no doubt appealed strongly to her imagination. They had many a walk together under the trees of Arenenberg. It seemed as though a budding idyll united the youthful aspirations of these two exiles, and lookers-on already anticipated its speedy fulfilment. As regards Mathilde, although the feeling he inspired in her was as faint as the dissimilarity between them was strong, it is clear that he occupied her mind. He certainly thought seriously of her. Queen Hortense was strongly in favour of their union.

The two ill-advised incidents of Strasburg and Boulogne put an end to these matrimonial projects. Strife ensued between the Beauharnais and the Bonapartes. Jérôme and his family loudly denounced the dreamy, Utopian, yet rash, claimant, to whom they denied all right to stake a glorious inheritance to the prejudice of his relatives. Scores of times it has been said and written that Princess Mathilde became estranged from Louis Napoleon after this affair, in which his judgment and wisdom appeared so questionable. This was not the case. On the contrary, some original letters of Queen Hortense have passed through our hands which attest that, although the Princess had been forced to yield to parental authority,

she still sympathized warmly, even passionately, with her cousin. In these letters Hortense often recurs to the subject of the marriage, which she had considered both possible and desirable, and also to the young Princess.[1]

"I have only had one letter," she writes in 1837 to the Countess Le Hon, "from her who was to have been my daughter-in-law. She alone has made no sign throughout this painful time. Still, I do not lay the blame for this on her, poor little girl. I expect it is not her fault at all. Her father has probably forbidden her to lift a finger. But you can understand that after this a reconciliation would be scarcely possible. In the event of a marriage, and even after the marriage, we should always remember it. But she will be the one to suffer. For I ask you, who will marry her? Her father has nothing but debts. . . . And a choice is difficult under such conditions."

That she had earnestly hoped for the union of Louis Napoleon and Mathilde is evident from the irritation, which she makes no attempt to disguise, at the frustration of her wish. She returns to the subject of the unfortunate Strasburg affair, a rash design of which she had always disapproved.

"I was angry with the dear child, who risked his own head, in the hope, no doubt, of restoring the family fortunes and of dragging it out of the mire. But when I saw his grief, I forgot my anger, and could not find it in my heart to reproach him for giving me such anxiety. On the contrary, I sought excuses for him, trying to prove to myself that he had done right; for it is despicable to make praise or blame depend on success or failure."

But in the eyes of the rest of the family the great man's nephew was a visionary schemer whose obstinacy in rushing upon his fate was exceedingly prejudicial to the peace, prosperity, and reputation of the Bonapartes.

[1] These letters were shown to us by the Princess Poniatowska, the daughter of the Countess Le Hon, to whom they were addressed.

"While his father has stopped his modest allowance of six thousand francs, because he dared to take such a step without consulting him, his uncle (Jérôme) has broken off the marriage for the same reason. . . . As for her whose portrait you saw (Princess Mathilde), she has listened rather to the voice of her heart. She certainly did wish to marry her cousin, for one day, in reply to her mother who spoke of him, she said—

"'But they say the young man is charming.'

"And in reply to the fears expressed by one of her cousins she added—

"'Really, it was well worth risking one's neck to attain.' You see her disposition. Then as her cousin's action was still further discussed, she said—

"'I like him the better for it.'"

This constancy of love and faith was the more touching, because she was the only person who showed such feelings.

"Her poor cousin," continues Queen Hortense, "is despised and abandoned by every one. . . . But he has his mother, and she knows that she is most needed in misfortune."

Do not these definite assertions completely upset the theory of Princess Mathilde's inconstancy to the future Emperor?

She returned first to the Court of Würtemberg and then rejoined her father in Tuscany, the ex-King, Jérôme, whose empty coffers were badly in need of some lucky golden shower to replenish them. But thanks to her sunny youth, her charms of mind and person, and her illustrious birth, a wealthy husband was not so long to seek as her paltry dowry had led the châtelaine of Arenenberg to anticipate. During her residence in the Orlandini palace she had several suitors. A Strozzi had come forward. An Aguado too, whose father, the wealthy Marquis Aguado, had promised tens of millions to his son

if he could win the favour of Napoleon's niece. By a curious coincidence, known to very few, this same Aguado, refused by Mathilde, transferred his attentions to the fair-haired Eugénie de Montijo. He was seen to weep bitterly at Hamel's when he learnt that the Emperor had crossed his path and scattered his dreams.

Mathilde, who mingled freely in Florentine society, was soon attracted by a foreigner, a strikingly handsome personality in his Circassian uniform. The young man who caught her girlish fancy was Count Anatole Demidoff, the Tuscan Prince di San Donato. To declare herself in his favour was to take a very bold step. She must have known that in so doing she was thwarting the secret intention of the Emperor of Russia. It is clear that the voice of passion must have been strong within her, since she might have looked far higher. In after years the Princess found pleasure in recalling this period of her youth, and in the company of a few intimate friends she often drew a comparison between what she was and might have been. Although the Tsar always affected to regard Napoleon III as a parvenu, and underneath the civilities of diplomacy to treat him as inferior to the kings and princes of older dynasties, it was his cherished plan to marry his son Alexander to a Bonaparte. And now she, on whom the honour of the imperial choice had fallen, eluded him to follow an impulse which one day she would surely regret.[1]

"I shall never forgive you this," was his first greeting to her, in a moment of irritation, when she appeared at his Court as the Countess Demidoff.

Anatole Demidoff, Prince di San Donato, in Tuscany, had more than his handsome figure and his rank to recommend him; he possessed considerable wealth. His father had been Russian Ambassador at Rome and Florence, and, what was worth far more, he owned mines in the Ural—an inexhaustible source of revenue

[1] The marriage took place November 1, 1840.

—which enabled him to surround himself with the luxury of a satrap. Count Demidoff's house was the rendezvous of foreigners. He liked to display the evidences of his wealth to a crowd of spectators; it was the man's weakness to wish to dazzle society with his ponderous magnificence. His drawing-rooms were heavily gilded, filled with pictures, bronzes, and malachite. On great occasions very valuable jewels used to be exhibited in glass cases, and as he was not over-fastidious in the choice of his guests, two servants were always placed on guard to check the temptations of indiscreet amateurs. He kept in his pay a French theatrical company, whom he had originally engaged during his residence in Rome, to perform pieces from the "Gymnase" in his residence, the Ruspoli palace. Ill, aged, and crippled, he never ceased giving entertainments, and the denser the noisy, pushing crowd which filled his rooms, the better was he pleased. His peculiarities were notorious, as was also his Asiatic ostentation—devoid alike of taste and moderation. His benevolence, however, was no less renowned; some of his generous deeds were of the most useful and enlightened description. He founded in Florence a valuable picture-gallery, a school and a richly endowed asylum. At his death public opinion decided that the services Count "Nicolo" had rendered to the city of the Medicis entitled him to a statue, which was accordingly erected in one of the public squares.

Anatole Demidoff, on whom the reigning Grand Duke had conferred the title of Prince of San Donato (from the name of his Tuscan estates), continued and even extended still further this large and luxurious way of life, amid splendour, philanthropy, and artistic interests. He showed, however, more discernment and greater culture. He had a certain amount of literary talent. We have from his pen some impressions of his travels and a series of articles, in the form of letters, on the Russian Empire, which were

published in the *Débats*. He earned the reputation of a Mæcenas. By weeding out and adding to the collections bequeathed to him he greatly raised their value. But he had not inherited the tastes and wealth of his father without some of his peculiarities. He was abrupt in action, capricious in mood, and despotic in temper. He was especially subject to fits of violent jealousy, though the licence he permitted himself in the matter of conjugal fidelity hardly warranted this attitude. He was ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, and lived at a reckless pace. With his natural gifts, his noble blood, and his elegance, it might have been supposed that he yielded to some compelling passions, inspired even in the frivolous circles which were the scene of his excesses. But this was not the case; it was known that the *demi-mondaines* to whom he sacrificed one of the handsomest princesses in Europe cost him exceedingly dear.

One day, however, he chose to consider that his exclusive rights had been infringed, and showed his displeasure in a manner so truly barbaric as to render a separation inevitable.

The pair had just returned from Paris, where the Count and Countess Demidoff occupied a magnificent house in the Rue St. Dominique. On the occasion of their return to Florence the reception-rooms of the San Donato palace were the scene of a brilliant gathering. The dancers were moving in a maze of light and music. Suddenly, in the midst of this animated scene, before some hundreds of spectators who watched in dumb amazement, the Prince, in a fit of savage and unreasonable jealousy, walked straight up to his young wife and slapped her on both cheeks. Beneath this public insult she remained speechless; then quickly regaining her self-possession, she withdrew to her own apartments. In the morning, without seeing her husband again, she made her way to St. Petersburg, confident of finding protection and

PRINCESS MATHILDE

justice with her maternal uncle, Nicholas I. The Emperor was the more inclined to accord her both, because he was attached to her, whereas, on the contrary, he had no liking whatever for Prince Demidoff.

A Russian subject was in question, most of whose property was in Russia. Nicholas could therefore speak and act with authority, for he held in his hand a guarantee for the man's submission. He undertook himself to make a settlement of the property, which should secure for his niece, the Princess Mathilde, a handsome independence. He authorized the deed of separation, ordered Demidoff to pay her £8,000 a year, and forbade him to occupy the same place of residence as his wife. The Prince di San Donato, headstrong as he was, found himself compelled for once to yield to a stronger will than his own.

In the private history of Princess Mathilde, Anatole Demidoff has always borne the entire responsibility for the rupture. All the gifts and advantages of his brilliant education were neutralized by his violent temper and unbridled dissipation. Yet was he alone to blame? Were his jealous rages purely the outcome of his imagination? It is but just to plead the extenuating circumstances of the case. Mathilde was handsome, with the kind of beauty that calls forth homage and devotion; in Florence she was surrounded by admirers, some of whom, such as the Baron de Poilly, Captain Vivien, and Nieuwerkerke, were extremely pressing. Any man in Demidoff's circumstances might have felt a breath of alarm. In all justice he might have been treated a little less severely. He certainly contributed handsomely to the princely state kept up by the wife he had wedded, whom he was forbidden ever again to see. It was not till long afterwards, when Demidoff, worn out by pleasure, was merely a living wreck, that this injunction was withdrawn. "What does it matter now?" said Alexander II. He had tried to open up a way of recon-

ciliation by touching the most sensitive chord in Mathilde's heart—her cult of the past—by parading the warmth of his Bonapartist convictions in the purchase of the villa in Elba where Napoleon had spent his exile, and in the collection of relics at extravagant prices. In vain. The blow his hand had dealt still burnt her cheek, and the remembrance was like a wound in the proud heart of Mathilde.

Nevertheless this haughty, Napoleonic soul did not refuse to accept an appreciable share of his fortune.[1] And certainly the social position of the handsome Madame Demidoff, whose fortune was almost trebled from the imperial coffers during the eighteen years the dynasty was in power, was one in which it was easy for a woman to shine who was both wealthy and clever.

In 1847 this French Princess who had been brought up abroad left Italy for good. With a magnanimity which the Bonapartes were in no haste to imitate when they were in a position to do so on behalf of the Orléanist exiles, Louis Philippe had given permission for Jérôme and his daughter to return to France. Mathilde received the most flattering welcome at the King's Court. She was in the front rank of the women admitted to the private evenings of Queen Marie Amélie. She was soon on terms of frank affection with the Duc d'Aumale, whose intelligence, like her own, was capable of a wide tolerance. This mutual esteem outlasted the circumstances which brought it about. Time, which obliterates all things—friendship or enmity, glory and defeat—was powerless to lessen this sentiment. After the many revolutions which had taken place the world was still to see a Bonaparte a frequent visitor at Chantilly, and the Duc d'Aumale a constant guest at the table over which she presided in the Rue de Courcelles.

[1] The sum total of the income paid by the Demidoffs for sixty years amounted to £480,000.

Momentous events were now drawing near. In September, 1848, while she was still at Dieppe, her cousin, Louis Napoleon, arrived from Paris and stayed at the Hôtel du Rhin. His thirty-four years of exile were over. A free man, he now once more trod the soil which he had left at the age of eight and to which he had twice returned a prisoner. He had not a friend in the capital whose whole population he burned to attach to his person. Moreover, the sinews of politics, which are the same as those of war, were wholly lacking. Miss Howard's advances had vanished. At this critical moment Mathilde rendered him a great service. Louis Napoleon, on arrival at Dieppe, had sent her an express messenger. She hastened to him. Their separation had lasted long. In this, their first, meeting a few brief minutes were devoted to their tender recollections of the past; then he plunged into the essential question, showed her how indispensable money was to him in his electoral campaign, and insisted on the necessity for this effort, which he was confident would be successful. Mathilde emptied her cash-box, or to speak more correctly, she pledged her diamonds and pearls, which were both very fine, and handed over the proceeds to her cousin. She acted in faith and on a generous impulse, and never had cause to regret it. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly—the first stage on the journey; shortly afterwards he became President—the second step towards the coveted dictatorship. We have accurate information respecting this treaty of alliance between Mathilde and Napoleon; actors or witnesses have carefully preserved the memory of it.[1] Is it true, as reported, that the President of the Republic on the morrow of the *coup d'état* renewed the offer of marriage made before Boulogne, and that she declined the crown? Is it a fact that to this offer of a throne she replied, "I infinitely

[1] In particular, Marshal Canrobert, whose notes were collected and put together by Monsieur Germain Bapst.

prefer my independence, as it will permit me to love whom I love and what I love." We may be allowed to doubt it. Such statements regarding this romantic episode have often been repeated, but leave us sceptical in the absence of proof. Princess Mathilde was still Countess Demidoff.[1] Moreover, the Emperor's attentions were already diverted towards another object. A more plausible story puts into his mouth such words as these: "Until there is an empress in France, you are first here, and your place will be at my right hand."

Mathilde, assisted by a few ladies in high favour, such as the Marquise de Contades, did the honours of the Elysée. It is said that she performed her task with perfect ease and grace. In the intervals she entertained in her own house, and prepared the harvest for the Prince-President. She brought to him all that was illustrious or influential in her own circle. She was never more influential. She had not only a salon, but a court in which many rivalries sprang up and contended with each other. Those who knew her at that time, and have placed on record their recollections, unanimously declare that with her profile like a Roman medallion, her clear brown eyes, so expressive and sensitive, her splendid fair hair, her aristocratic hands and fine bearing, she created a striking impression.

It was at her house that her cousin met Mademoiselle de Montijo for the first time, and she was the first to be taken into the confidence of the Emperor as regards his matrimonial project, of which she strongly disapproved.[2] The project was quickly executed. A few days after the ceremony she was invited to dinner at the Tuileries. One of the persons present (the Countess Walewska) told me that the Emperor had on either side of him Mathilde and the Duchess of Hamilton, between whom at different times his matrimonial intentions had fluctuated. To the one he

[1] It must be borne in mind that there was no divorce between the Princess Mathilde and the Count Demidoff; they were merely separated, and her name continued to be Madame Demidoff.

[2] January 5, 1854.

said, "Mathilde, if you had wished you might have been here now."[1] And to the other: "As for you, Mary, it seems to me that you would not have done badly in the position either." But the page was closed.

It was inevitable that Mathilde's star should now begin to wane. Raised to the rank of Imperial Highness by way of compensation, Princess Mathilde still continued to entertain her former friends.

It was no secret that she had been one of the first objects of Napoleon III's affections; some thought that France would have enjoyed greater security and happiness if fate had ruled that their interrupted betrothal should be resumed on the throne. The cast of Mathilde's mind, her sincere tendency towards Liberalism and her frank sympathy with Prince Napoleon's broader policy both in home and foreign affairs were, it was thought, a pledge of a more salutary influence than that ultimately wielded over him by the impetuous and short-sighted Empress Eugénie. It may be so; but it must be admitted that she also had her vagaries, her capricious impulses, her divagations of opinion, which were not always prompted by the most

[1] To tell the truth, she had never been honoured with the first love of her cousin. In the month of June, 1834, Louis Napoleon had in view the Duchess of Padua. "You would do me a pleasure," he writes to his father, the Count de St. Leu, ex-King of Holland, "if you would give me your opinion about this alliance, though I am in no hurry to marry." The following year the question of marriage was brought up again; Prince Louis Napoleon was then twenty-seven years of age, and was residing at the castle of Arenenberg. There was a rumour, for which there does not appear to have been much foundation, that he was then about to marry the Queen Dona Maria of Portugal. His third matrimonial project embraced the Princess Mathilde. After the Boulogne affair he escaped to England, and fell in love with a young and charming English girl, Miss Fanny Rowles, who with her brother-in-law —by a strange coincidence which looks like fatality—was actually living at Chislehurst, in Camden House, the very house in which, twenty-six years later, Napoleon III was destined to die. This marriage would have taken place but that Miss Rowles discovered the *liaison* which then existed between the Prince and Miss Howard.

Mary, Duchess of Hamilton, née Princess of Baden, was born in 1817, and died in 1888. Her mother, Stephanie, Grand-Duchess of Baden, was by birth Viscomtesse Beauharnais, and the adopted daughter of Napoleon I.

logical patriotism. It was, in fact, easy to see that she had learned to live and think outside France. In the very midst of the Crimean War, under the influence of a flattering letter written to her by the Tsar, which began with these words, "I really do not know why France is making war upon me," she loudly affirmed her Slavophile sympathies; and an astonished nation saw the Emperor's own cousin carrying on a friendly correspondence with the ruler of the state with which her country was at war. It is obvious that this conduct could scarcely have been gratifying to Napoleon III.

Princess Mathilde had a kind of dynastic affection for the Emperor. The incompatibility of their temperaments was nevertheless flagrant.

"I could never have got on with Louis Napoleon," she once declared, "because I always go straight before me, without any shuffling in words or acts."

Returning from Compiègne one evening, she remarked in the hearing of several friends who never forgot the words—

"We should never have more than half agreed. How could we? The man is neither open nor impressionable. Nothing rouses him."

"A man who never gets angry, whose strongest expression of fury is, 'It is absurd!' He never even whispers anything stronger. If I had married him, I think I should have broken his head open just to make sure what was inside."

At her own table she often let fall words of imprudent candour—confessions so free as to be absolutely thoughtless—as on that occasion when at the end of a dinner she remarked, oblivious of the fact that her words would probably be carried to the ears of her relatives at St. Cloud—

"I never wished for the downfall of Louis Philippe. I was happier during his reign."

However devoid of ambition she sought to appear, these words betray a grain of bitterness at the disappointments she had experienced—disappointments in which the Empress had a hand. Eugénie and Mathilde, brought very near together by their common mourning in the terrible year of the death of the Prince Imperial, were on far less friendly terms in their younger days, when they were respectively sovereign paramount and princess in opposition.

When on the evening of January 28, the occasion of the civil marriage at the Tuileries, Mathilde and her brother found themselves by right of birth appointed to lead the bride to the Emperor, what a regretful comparison she must have drawn as she recalled the circumstances which had led her, the niece of the founder of the dynasty, to form a joyless union which linked her, not with the heart or the mind, but with the immense fortune of Demidoff. We cannot read her thoughts, however. But all those around her saw that there was but little sympathy or friendship between the two women, each of whom was in character and ideas the antithesis of the other. Whilst Napoleon maintained for his cousin an unchanging cordiality, Eugénie became gradually estranged, appearing less and less frequently at her parties, and treating the new Imperial Highness with a strictly ceremonious formality. There were intervals of coldness, symptoms of which were patent to all watchful eyes. In the spring of 1857 it was noticed that Court dinners followed each other in quick succession in honour of the Grand Duke Constantine, and yet Princess Mathilde had received no invitation. Was it a shadow of vexation, of slight pique because the Grand Duke's first visit had been paid to Mathilde before any other members of the family? Or was there some other reason? The fact remains that she was absent from these state joustings. It is true that on May 3 two princesses were present, but they were aged

and most unattractive, garrulous and wandering in speech, according to the malicious Viel-Castel; they certainly could not have taken the place of the radiant and handsome sister of Prince Napoleon. On another occasion the coolness between the two ladies was increased by the warmth with which she espoused the cause of Sainte-Beuve's election to the Senate, when that writer was not of the Court party.

It has been said that the Empress was hurt at the popularity of Princess Mathilde and by the social success her amiability won for her, and that she had but small desire to have her by her side at the Tuileries. Moreover, was not their way of thinking, seeing, and believing totally antagonistic?

A passionate Catholic, and devoted to the priesthood, Eugénie used all her influence upon the imperial policy to ensure the triumph of Rome's temporal sovereignty. Mathilde, however kindly disposed she showed herself towards the Abbé Coquereau, had in the aggregate a horror of cardinals, priests, and the papal authority. Eugénie, in consequence, kept the Princess Mathilde at a distance, a fact which made the latter's renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the official world somewhat involuntary.

She could not have exerted her influence without at least obtaining a hearing. But her hour had gone by.

In a general way it may be said that with the Bonapartes, family ties depended less on their affections than on dynastic or interested motives.

The first member of her family with whom Mathilde fell out was her father Jérôme, who cannot be said to have been a model of virtue, either as to morals, sense of honour, or disinterestedness. Has it not been affirmed that he went so far as to offer his own son-in-law, Demidoff, a written proof of the intimacy of the Princess Mathilde with Nieuwerkerke, in return for a sum of money? On

COUNT ANATOLE DEMIDOFF, PRINCE OF SAN-DONATO,
AND HUSBAND OF PRINCESS MATHILDE, IN SPANISH COSTUME

January 1, 1855, Napoleon III was prevented from taking part in the family dinner-party. Therefore the ex-King of Westphalia, recently appointed Governor of the Invalides, entertained all the Emperor's guests at the Palais Royal; and, by virtue of the occasion, he was reconciled with his daughter, to whom he had previously made paternal advances. The following day he called on Mathilde to take her some handsome New Year's gifts, and described his satisfaction in the renewal of their friendly relations by saying: "Thanks to you, I have slept better than for a long time past."

Between her and her brother there were frequent misunderstandings; she did justice to his superior intelligence, but had little esteem for his character. He was jealous of Mathilde's advantages, and pronounced them out of proportion, exaggerated, and unfair. It is a fact that financially her position was enviable. In 1860 her income —already very ample—was increased by the award of an annual subsidy of 300,000 francs,[1] which, added to the 200,000 of her dowry that had been returned to her, and the income she drew yearly from Demidoff, made up her total revenues to 700,000 francs—a handsome sum with which to maintain the position of a princess! Mathilde had some cause for irritation against her brother, Jérôme Napoleon, that extraordinarily gifted but unsatisfactory prince whose mind was capable of lofty aspirations, whose reasoning was so acute, but who managed nevertheless to compromise himself and every one else by his words and actions.

"He is an impossible creature," she used to declare.

[1] These special grants ended with the Empire which awarded them. Princess Mathilde's fortune during the last years of her life consisted almost exclusively of the Demidoff allowance, an annuity of 200,000 francs (not 200,000 roubles), which she spent lavishly in keeping up her position, indulging her hospitable tastes, and in private charities. Beyond her collections of pictures, jewels, and other valuable objects, she left no capital worth speaking of.

"I know it only too well, and all of us here in France are of the same opinion."

When the question was raised of a marriage between Prince Napoleon and Clotilde, the prim and austere daughter of Victor Emmanuel, she cried wittily—

"Jérôme with Clotilde—that would indeed be the devil in a holy-water bowl!"

Once when a proposal was made to increase Jérôme's allowance, she could not refrain from saying to the Emperor, with a frankness less than sisterly—

"You evidently do not know that Napoleon is your bitterest enemy; you have no idea how they talk in his house."

Obviously a spirit of harmony was not one of the attributes of the reigning family.

Mathilde attended as few of the Court functions as her rank and position would allow. Her extremely quick temper, and her love of truth at any price, made her ill at ease in this atmosphere of insincerity. She had no voice in the family councils. On the contrary, she was shut out of every important consultation; and it was well known that in the Imperial Family masculine and feminine members were, to quote a biographer, by no means agreed as to the direction in which the eagle should fly; that trying to please one cousin brought a risk of offending another, and that the same thing applied to the women of the family.

Although at heart she felt considerable bitterness—for, like her brother Jérôme, she possessed a remarkable fund of activity—she carefully abstained from allowing a whisper of complaint to escape her. She invariably declared that she was satisfied, and tried not only to feel it, but to make her friends believe it.

"The Tuileries . . . St. Cloud . . . how dull is the Château of St. Cloud! It is odd how glad I always am to come away from both places. I am not at home

at Court. There is a difference both in feeling and language there. I cannot explain it. But I know myself to be quite another person, and I am only anxious to get away and be once more my own dear self."

She consoled herself for her enforced political inaction by surrounding herself with a large circle of friends and guests, whose chief recommendation was talent, and she profited by this exclusion from official circles to make her salon as eclectic as possible. Bonapartists, Legitimists, Republicans, and Orleanists—all shades of political creeds met there. At these mixed gatherings all schemes were strictly banished, and no one was allowed to betray or advertise his private opinions.

Princess Mathilde's salon had no equal in the nineteenth century for length of ascendency. It was quite an institution, so Alfred Mézières once told me. It lasted more than half a century, during which period it was the home and centre of Parisian intellect.

But the most splendid and perfect years of this Mathildian Academy were unquestionably those of the Second Empire, when her name, her surroundings, position, and rank were all at their brightest and best.

She did not confine herself exclusively to her own circle. She went through a very worldly phase when no great social function was considered complete without her presence. Neither was she above adding her own original note to masked balls and similar entertainments. In the winter of 1864 she took great interest in a fancy dress which she had designed to wear at a ball given by the Duc de Morny. She did not go as a *marquise* of the eighteenth century, nor yet as Diana the Huntress, but as a beggar, dressed in rags—studio rags—arranged for her by her own artist Giraud, and her face covered by a wire mask so disfiguring that she was totally unrecognizable. In this disguise she derived great enjoyment from hearing another language than that of gallantry, even though the

men carried sincerity to rudeness, and the women called her old and ugly. She knew that she was neither one nor the other.

Gradually, however, she laid aside her youthful gaiety and all frivolous dissipation, and infinitely preferred to entertain her friends at home rather than to kill time in other people's drawing-rooms. She suffered acutely when the exigencies of society obliged her to go out to large gatherings where she was compelled to martyrdom among empty-headed and prosy people. She would turn green with annoyance when some unlucky chance imprisoned her in an uncongenial circle, while not far away she could see an intellectual group chatting pleasantly together. Those who knew her well recognized her state of mind at such moments. She would turn towards the talkers, inquisitive and interested, almost fancying she could catch what they were saying. She would have enjoyed taking her share in their conversation, but instead she was compelled to listen —to what? To empty phrases, to inane remarks. One afternoon when two rather frivolous women had kept her listening for some time to their incoherent chatter, she exclaimed as soon as they had left the room—

"Really it would be quite enough to racket in the world for thirty years, but after that age one ought to be allowed to retire from the weary round of social duties."

On another occasion she lamented the paucity of women who were interested in art, in new literary developments, or who showed any kind of curiosity, if not virile, at least lofty and unconventional.

"Amongst the many women one meets or receives," she said, "how few there are with whom one can converse! If a woman were to come in now I should have to change the subject of conversation at once. You will soon see."

Experience showed her to be right.

Independent in her judgments and opinions, as she has

been depicted, she built for herself, as it were, a little chapel of her own, apart from imperial circles, wherein worshipped such men as Nieuwerkerke, Sainte-Beuve, Jules de Goncourt, Mérimée, the painters Hébert, Giraud, Baudry, Fromentin, Ary Scheffer, and masters of literature such as Théophile Gautier, Dumas, Sardou, to say nothing of a number of lesser lights whose names we forget. The great men of intellect, those who studied life, idealists and theorists, apostles of æstheticism—each one contributed his own personal note, some sincerity of taste or sentiment.

There were evenings when music was in favour. She gave these more from condescension than for pleasure, for her temperament was anti-musical. On such occasions she invited more women than usual, who, in their dainty toilettes looking like a flower garden, formed part of the setting of the picture. Conscious of being admired, they listened languidly in studied attitudes, playing coquettishly with their fans, and were actually the attraction offered by the Princess to the eyes of her male guests. "What I love best about music," remarked one of the De Goncourts gracefully, "are the women who listen to it."

A few dates were kept sacred, when the usual habits of the household were interrupted. On May 30, for instance, she gave a party every year in honour of the Emperor. Then the arrangements were of the most sumptuous order. Electric light twinkled in the foliage of the park. Indoors brilliant lustres threw into high relief the rich hangings of the walls and the diamond orders on the coats of the guests. From the depth of their easy chairs their Excellencies the ministers and diplomatists lent themselves to the pleasure of the moment. And he in whose honour the party was given would walk through the rooms that night with his dragging step and a vague smile on his face.

Having paid her debts as an Imperial Highness, she would immediately drop back to her usual receptions.

Now and then she would visit some of her dearest and most illustrious guests. Dumas the younger, and Sardou, often entertained her at Marly. She would divide her visits between them, taking great interest in the furniture, collections, and varied souvenirs of the author of *Patrie*, with the added charm of his conversation. She had known Madame Sardou and her sisters from their early girlhood, and ever since the marriage of the celebrated playwright with the daughter of Eudore Soulié, one of her most faithful friends, their friendship had been unbroken. Sardou used often to escort her round the park, trying to convey to her mind some idea of what the place had been in all the splendour of royal and imperial state. Towards the end of her life, still filled with admiration for the beauty of Marly, its wide horizons, its picturesqueness, and memories of past elegance and luxury, she was heard to say with a sigh of regret: "It was here I ought to have pitched my tent, and not at Saint Gratien."

Under the Empire, the Princess's receptions were the most distinguished in Paris; she found herself compelled to reserve Sunday for current invitations, Tuesday for official personages, and Wednesday for her intimates, who were almost exclusively artists. This little court, formed on the model of the Italian courts of the sixteenth century, was loved and belauded as the meeting-ground of the choice spirits of the day. It was stamped with her own strongly marked personality, and those she received used to say they were not Bonapartists, but Mathildians.

An unlimited and constant hospitality was one of the needs of her nature. Her beautiful country house at Saint Gratien lent itself specially well to the purpose. It has been erroneously stated that this mansion was the historic manor of Catinat. It dated, however, merely from the first Empire, when it was built by the Count de Luçay, Prefect of the Palace. It had by no means the

imposing appearance of a fine piece of architecture, but was merely a roomy house, tastefully furnished, without any salient features. It has often been described. The ground floor comprised the hall, the great drawing-room with its chintz covers and ceiling draped with the same material forming a kind of tent; a pretty verandah shaded by the foliage of a Virginia creeper and looking on the park; a library, music-room, and billiard-room; while the wings, built to the Princess's own plans, contained a dining-room and a studio. A second studio had been arranged in an old chapel in the park, where, curiously enough, the altar had been preserved. Here the house-party would sometimes meet together. A handsome double winding staircase led to the upper floors of the Catinat pavilion. On the first landing stood a huge mirror, on which Eugéne Giraud, artist in ordinary to Mathilde, had painted a decoration in Louis Quinze and Directoire style, delicately symbolizing the seven capital sins. On this floor were the Princess's own apartments. The floor above was kept for visitors—eight rooms in all, the handsomest of which was gallantly reserved for newly married couples.

At Saint Gratien she entertained a constant succession of friends throughout the whole summer. It was her greatest joy thus to receive and retain her guests. A visitor coming for the first time to spend a week or so at Saint Gratien, the Princess would do the honours of her house with cheerful simplicity, opening her rooms and showing more particularly her own private study, crowded with knick-knacks of all sorts, which betrayed her tastes, occupations, and habits. Then she would show her visitors' rooms, explaining that her greatest pleasure was to have company and to live among those she liked, and that she was glad indeed to be in a position to gratify her taste. With her income, she would say, her tastes and her inquiring mind, she might have set herself to

pursue some extravagant object, to execute extraordinary projects; she might have erected public monuments, or built herself the palace of a stockbroker; but she infinitely preferred—and this little speech was constantly on her lips—"her chintz covers and some old friends seated upon them."

On days when she gave a large party by special invitation, her guests, as at the receptions at Compiègne, used to arrive at Saint Gratien at the luncheon hour in a long string of carriages. After the meal all would pass out on to the verandah. The Princess, who detested the smell of tobacco, would courageously light the cigars of a few hardened smokers, and interminable conversations would begin. One of the favourite amusements on these occasions was to "harness"—as some of her intimates used to say—the artist in ordinary of Her Highness Mathilde Napoleon to an album of caricatures. Giraud excelled at this art. Resting her arm on the head of the couch on which the artist was seated, the Princess would be the first to laugh at the picture growing beneath his nimble pencil. On one page it would be Mathilde herself, posing for Carpeaux's bust of her, dropping a kiss on the muzzle of her dog Chine; or it would be a back view of the Abbé Coquereau, bursting out of a child's breeches; or a caricature of Arago weighed down beneath a gigantic Legion of Honour; or perhaps Maréchal with his broad, open face, or the double outline of the de Goncourts holding a single pen. Giraud's humorous pencil was an unfailing source of amusement to the company. All liked to figure in the album. There were boxes and albums full to overflowing with sketches by Giraud.[1] One in

[1] Giraud also gave free rein to his humorous fancies after every soirée given by Nieuwerkerke in his apartments at the Louvre. On Friday evenings after the great crowd of guests had departed and only half a dozen intimate friends remained, the painter would make a water-colour sketch at the expense of one of the distinguished men who frequented the parties of the Superintendent of Fine Arts. In June, 1855, the collection amounted to sixty drawings,

THE PRINCESS MATHILDE
(From the painting by Giraud)

particular was called the Comic History of the House. This would pass from hand to hand; its leaves were turned over and over again, and always with fresh amusement. Later on would follow an excursion down to the lake, where the boat-house over the landing-stage was well furnished with sculls and paddles for the little fleet of boats, skiffs and canoes, all ready for the usual turn on the water.

Sometimes after lunch Mathilde would take her friends for a short country ramble, chatting freely as she walked of the topic of the day, or any subject that came into her head. These were delightful little expeditions to which there was—if we may make the remark—only one drawback. Not content with the company of her friends, she was always surrounded by her dogs. These animals engrossed a great deal of her attention, much to the annoyance of her friends, who experienced considerable irritation at the frequent interruptions of the conversation caused by the Princess's constant calls to "Chine" or "Tom," whenever one or other of these interesting quadrupeds disappeared for a moment behind a bush or plunged into a thicket.

At other times she would have an industrious mood. Then she would betake herself in haste to her study There, in the quiet of the vast room, with its rich *portières*, its walls decorated with spreading leaves of gigantic palms, the Princess would work at some unfinished portrait. Hébert, seated behind her, superintended her labours. Or perhaps Giraud, standing at his easel, would work at some decorative scheme intended for the house. Of her other guests, one would read, another would embroider. Prince Gabrielli would strengthen the tones of some engraving; others would look through the albums, or chat together in a low voice. Thus an afternoon would slip quietly by until it was time to dress for dinner.

which were kept in a portfolio and regarded as a curiosity. The contents gradually increased.

Let us pause an instant to make closer acquaintance with a few of these people who formed the nucleus of this social colony.

Nieuwerkerke stands at the head of the list in virtue of his intimacy and the length of his visits. We shall recur to him later, when we touch on the subject of her affections. Eudore Soulié, one of the keepers of the palace at Versailles, and known to all students of Molière for his patient researches into the origin and parentage of the author of the *Misanthrope*, was another accredited guest at the house to which Nieuwerkerke had introduced him. He had constituted himself chief usher, whose duty it was to announce visitors. He fulfilled his task with curious indecisions and unexpected hesitations, and a punctiliousness which was almost excessive. One afternoon Théophile Gautier presented himself unexpectedly. Eudore Soulié thought it his duty to make inquiries: "Would the Princess receive Théophile Gautier?" "What!" cried the Princess heartily. "What! am I disposed to receive my poet!" Soulié was regarded as a pleasant comrade and a very sensible man. The stories which circulated about him add some special features to this generalization. It appears that his life held one pathetic episode which is not without its comic element. Of an impressionable nature, at the age of twenty a hopeless, passionate love affair drove him to despair and to an attempt at suicide by asphyxiation. The absurd feature of the drama lies in the receptacle he chose for the charcoal, which is usually the last resource of unhappy lovers. What was this? Nothing less than his father's hip-bath! Happy inspiration: the lead melted, and "Eudore-Werther" was thus saved to the world.

I must not overlook the Tallemant des Réaux of Mathilde's innermost circle, a man as clever as he was ill-natured, spiteful and vindictive, yet at the same time so interesting that all were eager to have a glance at his black books: this was Count Horace de Viel-Castel. In these

haunts he was ever on the watch, scanning with his sharp eyes the expression on the faces around him, listening attentively to the anecdotes in circulation, taking note of all the scandals and racy and spicy stories, writing them down at night on his tablets, with the addition of his own bitter-sweet comments and malicious insinuations.

He too had once been young, tender-hearted, sensitive, volatile, frivolous, perhaps, like all the rest, but also capable of a real and deep affection; and this, in fact, was the rock on which he struck. If his own account can be believed, he was born with a greater capacity for joy, passion, and pain than any one else; but time and experience must have greatly changed him. Viel-Castel was a very caustic critic. Rarely does his pen express approbation unaccompanied by a drop of gall. "I belong to a race," he used to say, "which can never be understood by the world, and which has ever been misjudged. I cannot love by halves; I love with my whole being, and by love alone do I care to be known." This probably explains the reason why he writes only of his wrath, jealousy, and hatred; but on this subject what eloquence he displays!

He had apparently a sincere affection for the Princess. He often speaks of her kindness, her charming thoughtfulness for her friends, of the presents he has received from her, of her graceful hospitality, and the pleasure it gave him—a great collector[1] of works of art—to acquire choice bits of bric-à-brac, that he might offer them to her.[2] Nevertheless, he did not spare her little weaknesses, her mistakes, her prejudices, or her credulity.

[1] In 1854 Viel-Castel presented to the Louvre Museum a collection of paintings taken from old Italian, Spanish, Flemish and French manuscripts of the twelfth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. To these he added on subsequent occasions various rare or curious articles in faïence or glass for the Ethnographical Museum.

[2] "I gave so many valuable little things to Princess Mathilde, which now adorn her cabinets, that I should find it difficult to enumerate them all" (Viel-Castel, *Mémoires*, October 9, 1854).

"The Princess, who certainly is the weakest creature in the world," is one of his recurring refrains. "The *salon* in the Rue de Courcelles is really deplorable," is another of his favourite sayings. She entertained there far too many people whom he disliked. The company was of a kind actually injurious to the hostess. Poor blind Princess! Why does she not allow him to drive out these false, designing cliques, who are constantly taking advantage of her?[1] He admits that Saint Gratien and its shady grounds are more congenial to him than the pernicious atmosphere of the drawing-rooms in the Rue de Courcelles.

"I have just returned from Saint Gratien, the estate which Princess Mathilde has bought. It is pretty and well arranged. My little room there is exceedingly comfortable."[2]

Indeed, he would have liked Saint Gratien very much indeed if his persistent ill-luck had not invariably brought him into contact there with Giraud, the Desprez, and Abbé Coquereau, the fag-end of the Princess's train. Fould was another of his pet aversions. The sight of Count Laborde inspired him with blind fury, especially after his fortunate rival had been appointed Director-General of the National Archives. He works himself up into a passion with Prince Jérôme Napoleon, and then is astonished at not getting a better reception at the Palais Royal. Coquereau, already mentioned, was a great trial to him. Madame Desprez too, reader to Her Imperial Highness, he hated like the plague.[3]

[1] "Poor Princess Mathilde! Your friends are very ill-chosen, and there is no one to give you good advice. Little by little you will yield to their blandishments; flattery is not without effect on you; in the end you are deceived; those who now kiss your hands would be the first to desert if fortune no longer smiled on you. Those who are nearest your person are your worst enemies; every word you speak is retailed and distorted; your troubles are reported, and your smallest imprudence registered against you" (July 18, 1853).

[2] July 31, 1854.

[3] "Madame Desprez is in high favour, and seeks to injure me in the Princess's esteem. She wanted them to seize my black book; the woman is a disgrace to her sex!"

Does he handle the writers and artists more mercifully? By no means. Alexandre Dumas, who poses as a great historian, is only a great *histrion* (actor) seen through his eyes. Alexandre Dumas the younger is a good-for-nothing who has had no home training. Théophile Gautier —but to enumerate them all would take too long. As regards journalists, he polishes them all off in one sentence:—

"It would probably be a great public service to abolish newspapers as political organs. France would be more peaceful, and what is still better, the Government would prevent a number of pushing people from obtaining the influence they covet."[1]

Nothing could be more indecent or more immodest than some of his anecdotes about the Court. According to him, all the highest society of Paris did not comprise a single honest woman; shamelessly they carried on their adulterous intrigues, or practised even more degenerate vices.[2] He mentions them by name, gives details, and alleges unheard-of things with a crudity of expression that the school of naturalistic novelists might envy. Never mind—morality, social or literary, has no more zealous champion than himself! It is amusing to read his indignant protests at the disgraceful success of the *Dame aux Camélias*:—

"The *Dame aux Camélias*, the new play by Alexandre Dumas junior, is an outrage upon all that the censor should defend. The play is a disgrace to our time, to a Government which puts up with it, and to a public which applauds."

[1] June 8, 1852.

[2] His memoirs are full of statements such as the following, aimed against all and sundry: "Madame la Marquise de Belbœuf and the Countess de Gouy scandalize Dieppe with their doings. The Princess declares that they get drunk, break windows, dance the *cancan*, and make such a scene that they even shock the *lorettes*. I dare say the Princess exaggerates, but there is some truth in it!" (September 17, 1854.)

His wrath is no less epic on the subject of George Sand and other writers who help to propagate our "modern itch," as Barbey d'Aurévilly would say. If he ever relaxes from his usual severity, it is with some such qualified expression as this, in which we see the utmost length to which his approval can go:—

"Madame de X—— is a pleasant and witty woman—something of a cat—but who is not nowadays!"

The Princess used laughingly to allude to Viel-Castel's spitefulness. His difficult temper required very careful handling. Viel-Castel liked to lay down the law on the existing state of affairs. The country needs this—the country wants that—he would declare. Hostile as he was to all classes, it is difficult to say exactly for which he made himself the spokesman. He denounced so many classes which go to form the mass of the nation that the remainder was wholly insignificant. The aristocracy seemed to him eaten up with vice. He called the middle classes the fleas of the social body. As for the labouring classes, what sympathy could he possibly entertain for such poor devils?

A strange nature, a malicious spirit, bristling with sharp points and charged with venom!

We must always be careful to avoid mud. At the same time we must take our profit where we find it. Viel-Castel makes too many serious indictments; but he also collected as he went along a number of significant facts, of details that had struck his observant eye, of whispers overheard, without which we should have known the motley society of the earlier years of the Second Empire very imperfectly. By raising the curtains of Princess Mathilde's salon he has shown us many unsuspected corners which would certainly not have been revealed by the camera operating officially in broad daylight.

More artistic, but no less scandal-mongers, the Goncourt found in this interesting circle all the material they

required ready to hand. They did not scruple to help themselves. This is evident from the abundance of information they give us about Mathilde and her friends. Jules de Goncourt sometimes stayed as long as three weeks at Saint Gratien, where the pleasant house, the shady woods, and well-ordered life soothed his over-excited nerves. Ever in search of repose and the supreme refuge of silence, and never finding them either in town or country, he enjoyed at the Princess's house at least a modicum of relaxation and rest. "Princes do not care for sick people," he said to her one day in a moment of morbid melancholy, in which he felt himself as tiresome to others as to himself.

Her reply was to employ all her powers of persuasion to induce him to remain with her. He should take up his abode at Catinat and have his own faithful Pélagie to wait on him.[1] Both brothers were devoted to Mathilde, especially the younger, who took no pains to conceal the fact. His feeling for her is obvious, not only when he tries to extol her heart and mind, but also in his Journal, when his pen trembles in his hand with pleasure as he describes some beautiful toilette she wore one evening, and on another occasion the pretty cherry silk, cut away at the neck and leaving her shoulders and arms bare, contrasting so charmingly with the black laces whose delicate tracery threw a dark reflection on the warm-hued skin. He writes of her like a literary man and a novelist inspired by the reality and by a feeling more complete than friendship. He goes so far that by his enthusiasm, the warmth of his zeal, and some slight verbal indiscretions, Jules de Goncourt does almost compromise the Princess. Several of his friends were of this opinion, and one—but why not

[1] Her hospitality did not prevent him from complaining in one of his morose moods: "To be ill, and not be able to be ill at home, to drag one's suffering and one's weakness from place to place, from rooms hired to rooms lent!" (November 1, 1869.)

give his name?—Alfred Stevens was deputed to give him a very delicate and carefully veiled hint.

Old Giraud of the Institute, the Princess's special artist, and his son, an equally clever painter, were both quite at home at Saint Gratien. Eugène Giraud was credited with being something of a courtier—a fact which did not prevent his exercising the utmost freedom of speech. He was on a footing of frank familiarity with his hostess, which did not protect him from a sharp rebuke when the artist, who was extremely unconventional, went a little too far and had to be called to order. He made up for such restraint, however, within the four walls of his own room, where all the gossips liked to meet to chat more at their ease and tell stories too highly seasoned for the Princess's table.

Giraud was respected for his fine talent and his frankness, which accorded with his eccentricity and easy-going manner of life. The patriarchal arrangements of his private life, enlivened by occasional escapades on the boulevards, furnished matter for many an amusing tale.

Having a house in town and another in the country, he rarely occupied the latter and used only the smallest possible portion of the former, where the *ménage* was of the most original description. Father, mother and son all occupied the same room, Giraud senior using a large easy chair, and Giraud junior occupying a couch placed at the foot of his mother's bed. The two men were in the habit of going out and coming in very late. The wife seldom went out, and used to go to bed about eight o'clock. At two in the morning the truants would return. The son would pick up one of the books lying about—the room was full of them—and read it aloud. A brisk interchange of opinions and ideas would continue until three or four in the morning, when all would become quiet, and the three would drop peacefully to sleep. As may be imagined, under these circumstances, Giraud and his son

were not early risers. On the other hand, the mistress of the house would be up with the dawn. It was she who made the morning coffee, which she served to her husband and son as soon as they were ready for it. Her artists enjoyed the beverage in bed, and would lie for long afterwards with their eyes shut. They had all the rest of the day in which to fix their impressions on canvas.

These Bohemian habits did not prevent Eugène Giraud, member of the Academy of Fine Arts and a pensioner of Princess Mathilde's, from making a very comfortable little fortune. Her houses in Paris and Saint Gratien enriched him without any trouble to himself, and he contrived to dispose of the productions of the family palette. In the history of Princess Mathilde as a patron of art the Giraud family figure largely. At least forty of their pictures, oils and water-colours, found their way into her gallery, but on the dispersal of the Princess's collection these works no longer found the same degree of favour with the public.[1]

Abbé Coquereau, Canon of Saint Denis and Chaplain-General to the Fleet—the very priest so roughly handled by Viel-Castel in his memoirs—was also on an excellent footing with the sceptical Princess, whom, perhaps, he hoped to convert. He set about it, however, with great gallantry, and never missed any distraction compatible with the dignity of his cassock. Profane jokes and sly insinuations were thoroughly to his taste. In the Princess's most intimate circle it was the Abbé's part to read aloud the love verses of a contemporary poet, with a force of expression and an air of simplicity, rendered the more droll by the fact of the reader's dress. A joke had to be carried very far before the Abbé took offence. As a rule he was very good-humoured and tolerant ; he was not the man to

[1] In the sale of May 18, 1904, the Girauds' largest work, "The Pigeon-hunter," by Victor, a very large canvas, realized only 475 francs. The best of the series, "Feeding the Swans on the Lake at Enghien," by Eugène, did not go beyond 420 francs.

influence the tone of the company in which he found himself; his cassock was never obtrusive. He was often, in fact, treated with scant courtesy, and his standing as a dignitary of the Church would seem to have been quite lost sight of. One night, when he was playing pool with the Patersons-Bonapartes, the two Americans, who were just then enjoying almost princely consideration, the pretentious Madame Desprez leaned over the billiard-table and, quite regardless of the players, proceeded to spread out an engraving which she explained to any one who would listen. Coquereau, an expert at the game, and anxious to push his advantage, pointed out to her several times that she was preventing them from playing. At first she turned a deaf ear to him; then suddenly she said, with considerable asperity—

"You forget yourself, Abbé; your remarks are extremely improper!"

But if he was easy-going in society, he was less indulgent to his clergy—criticizing one, recommending the removal of another, hinting at the Romish tendencies of a certain bishop, protesting against the pretensions of the Holy See, and showing very clearly that he expected soon to be rewarded for his ultra-Gallicanism with the gift of a bishopric. Princess Mathilde, who never spoke of him but as "that *good Abbé*," could not, with her penetration, help seeing through the artifices of the churchman. Once, when he dined at her house with the Minister of Public Worship, she watched him trying for several hours to curry favour with His Excellency, on whom the success of his candidature depended. She took him aside in the course of the evening and whispered in his ear—

"Do confess, dear Abbé, that if any one else had acted as you have been doing for the last four hours you would have dubbed him an artful designer!"

But she was kindly anxious for his welfare, and contributed much towards his advancement.

COUNT DE NIEWERKERKE, MINISTER OF FINE ARTS
(From the painting by Dubufe)

Théophile Gautier was favoured with Mathilde's warmest friendship, and was regarded very differently from either Abbé Coquereau or the biographer Viel-Castel. One morning she spoke to him very delicately about an appointment which she wished to offer him in her own household. Just as she had a groom-in-waiting,[1] a reader,[2] and other persons who held similar sinecures at her court, she now wanted a librarian, and had appointed him to this very light office.

"But really," said Théophile Gautier to a literary friend as they walked downstairs together, "has the Princess a library?"

"Take my advice, dear Gautier; act as if she had none."

She had a very sincere affection for this poet-colourist, this chiseller of words and brilliant conversationalist. If he was not quite so dear to her as the Count de Nieuwerkerke, the poet-enamellist Claudius Popelin,[3] or the realistic and observant modernist Jules de Goncourt, his place was at the very top of her table. He was the great attraction of her parties. Dumas tells us there were some houses in which he felt at his best the moment he

[1] This was General Bougenel, after whose death she delivered this little speech as a kind of certificate of good conduct: "The General had every good quality; he was ever at his post, and knew how to keep his place. During all the years that he followed me about as Groom-in-Waiting this excellent man never once trod on my train!"

[2] First and foremost was Madame de Fly, whose loss she considered irreparable, and of whom she wrote a sketch; for ladies-in-waiting she had in turn the unhappy Mme. de Saint Marsault, who was burnt to death while dressing for a ball, and Mmes. de Reiset, Ninette Vimercati, and de Serbay, *née* Rovigo. In addition, she had attached to her person a group of teachers whose duty it was to give her special instruction, such as Giraud for painting, Sauzet for music, Jules Zeller, recommended to her by Sainte-Beuve, who read with her for two hours daily, the subject being generally contemporary history.

[3] In the preface of a book which unfortunately was never put in circulation, Claudius Popelin drew a faithful picture of the Saint Gratien parties and a striking likeness of Théophile Gautier in the Princess's household.

crossed the threshold. Gautier was never more thoroughly himself, nor displayed his qualities so much at their best, as in this house, whether in Paris or at the Pavillon Catinat, where he knew himself to be so welcome, where he was perfectly happy and conscious only of an atmosphere of admiration and sympathy. Every word that fell from his lips was eagerly listened to. Elegant and beautiful women gazed at him. Here he lavished all the treasures of his poet's fancy. What was the cost of such pearls to him? He threw them broadcast with the munificence of a nabob.

He would discuss the infinite possibilities of art, or confess to some of his own peculiarities of taste with a charming childlike gaiety, and with bursts of merriment which changed the atmosphere like a current of laughing-gas. One of his favourite themes was the wail of the journalist, lamenting the necessity for grinding out copy daily when he had been born to mould prose or verse into plastic forms, or to string together under a sunny sky the picturesque images that filled his brain. When thus mounted on his favourite hobby, fired with animation, he did not neglect to inveigh with all his native eloquence against civilization, railways, and engineers, who overthrew nature's beauty, and ruined landscapes with their metal rails and other utilitarian inventions. What did all this matter to the mass of civilized people, to the crowd who were not like himself, and three or four others whom he knew, sensitive—and what is more exotic—spirits.

Mathilde would have been greatly pleased to see the author of *Emaux et Camées* take the place his genius merited among the immortal Forty. She devoted all her skill and perseverance to forwarding his candidature for the Academy, urging his claims with affectionate earnestness on the "green coats" who enjoyed her hospitality, and taking infinite pains to acquire the interest of others.

Sainte-Beuve gave a dinner at his house, to which, by her request, the austere Pongerville, the translator of *Lucrèce*, was invited. She herself was one of the guests, as well as Viollet-le-Duc and her artist Giraud. The evening was spent in endeavouring to get the honourable Academician to tell the story of the only two events of his life —his interview with Louis XVIII and his interview with Millevoye! Nobody cared a fig for either; but old Pongerville's vote was important to Gautier, therefore he must be won over and annexed to the cause! One more! Success might hang on this one man. All this clever diplomacy was fruitless. Théophile Gautier was not destined to occupy a chair in the Palais Mazarin.

Another figure who by no means passed unobserved in this exceptional setting was Mérimée. Towards the end of his life he often visited Princess Mathilde, knowing that he would meet many antipathetic personalities, but sure of finding his friend Viollet-le-Duc. At one time he tried to induce the Princess to find a winter residence on that sunny coast to which his own delicate health forced him to repair each year. By way of inducement he used to bring her plans of the villa he wanted her to buy, sketches done by his own hand, which failed apparently to convey an adequate idea of the beauty of the spot, for these garish pictures did not have the desired effect. He was forced to renounce the hope of having her pleasant company on the Riviera. But at least he was aware that the time spent under her roof in the Rue de Courcelles was not wasted. Here he distilled his delicate wit drop by drop. He found an audience who sipped this essence with enjoyment. He was, in fact, better to listen to than to look at. His face was not pleasing, his features were coarse, his eyebrows bushy, and his neck thick. But while he talked no one remembered his ugliness. His sarcastic ways were not to everybody's taste, nor the stress he laid on every point and subtlety which he wished

to bring out. On sensitive and impulsive people he had a rather chilling effect. His affected cynicism, his systematic repudiation of all illusions—originating perhaps in the bitterness with which he had watched the extinction of his own secret dreams—did not conciliate those who still hoped for much from life. Still, he was Mérimée; it was not easy to escape the domination of that powerful mind.

Of all the Princess's table-guests, the one most looked at and listened to was Sainte-Beuve. This physician of the mind, who could not safely have been accepted as keeper of consciences, in spite of the certificate given him by Jules Troubat, had first come into touch with some members of the Imperial Family in the salon of Princess Julie; or rather, he used to go from this lady's house to that of Princess Mathilde, as often as the ties of his literary work permitted, when he did not happen to be visiting Prince Jérôme at the Palais Royal. There is a piquant story of the end of his relations with Lucien's daughter.

A few yards from the Chamber of Deputies, Julie Bonaparte, Marchioness Roccagiovini, used to receive all the élite of Parisian and foreign society on Friday evenings in her house in the Rue de Grenelle, Saint Germain. Hither came writers, prominent artists, who were also to be met at the Princess Mathilde's parties in the Rue de Courcelles. She did not confine herself to receiving thinkers like Renan, imaginative writers like Barbey d'Aurévilly. She herself did not scorn to commit to paper the echoes of her soul. Moral reflections, outbursts of temper, were chronicled by her in a book which she once sent to Sainte-Beuve, begging the eminent critic to give her his opinion upon it. Unfortunately the authoress was so preoccupied by her intellectual toilette that she did not take the precaution of reading through her work before dispatching it. When Sainte-Beuve, anxious to comply with the Princess's request and act as

her literary counsellor and guide, turned over the leaves of the volume, his eyes fell upon a little criticism of his own speech upon the Diocese of Free Thought, in a style more princely than academic.

"I am surprised," said Julie Bonaparte—or words to that effect—"that Princess Mathilde should receive a man who has so little religion."

She did not stop at that, however, but added some amiable little remarks in this style:—

"Madame de B——, *née* de C——, receives every day from four to six. She always seems to know a number of stories about people, which she retails without giving her authority. This is what she told me about Sainte-Beuve. 'In spite of his age, he leads a disgusting life; he lives with three women at the same time, who all dwell under his roof.' Sainte-Beuve has left cards on me and has written to me, but has never been inside my drawing-room. He is admired as a writer and highly esteemed as a critic; when he expresses an opinion about a book his verdict is commonly accepted; but he enjoys no personal consideration. He went down on his hands and knees to get admission into the Senate, though he always makes fun of it. He has written very ill-natured things about people who have been good to him. They say he is very greedy, and, as I have already said, his private life is most immoral. Monsieur Sainte-Beuve has but one god, that is pleasure; he has no religious convictions; and one day, speaking of a man of the people, he said: 'A man without education is a field flower; whereas I am a hothouse flower.'"

By no means amused by this surprising page, Sainte-Beuve could not sit down quietly under the impression it made on him. His pen was at hand. He scribbled a revengeful reply which he sent forthwith, enclosed with the notebook of the Marchioness Roccagiovini. Here is the text of his reply. It is worth reading:—

"*June 16th*, 1868.

"PRINCESS,—I have the honour to return to you the manuscript books which you did me the honour to submit to me. Chance is sometimes both spiteful and witty. You will admit, Princess, that it has proved so on this occasion, since you yourself have given me the opportunity of reading a certain note concerning myself which is not wholly attributable to Madame de B——. I am inclined to thank you. It gives me an opportunity of remarking, Princess, that if I have never been inside your salon it is not for want of an invitation from you. It cannot therefore be said that the *lack of consideration* which I command has prevented my being admitted there, but rather to a discretion and instinctive distrust on my side, for which I have now every reason to congratulate myself.

"As for the other very serious charges with which you do not hesitate to soil your pen, they refute themselves. How could I be said to have gone down on my hands and knees in order to be admitted into the Senate, when I have not even written an article on the *History of Cæsar*, thus in no way imitating the example of M. M—— (Mérimée)?

"As for my religious convictions, you have yourself, Princess, introduced the subject on several occasions when I have had the honour of meeting you. And I may say that you expressed yourself on the subject with a crudity which led me to think you far more irreligious than I should ever wish one of your sex to appear.

"My private life has one advantage, that, in spite of its weaknesses, it is entirely natural and open. The tale of the three women established in my house is really a Herculean legend of the truth of which I cannot boast. At any time of my life it would have been false, wholly false, even in my best days, as friends who visited me can testify.

"Perhaps the thing that hurts me most in this passage —so unworthy of your pen—is the saying which you place in my mouth. What! can you suppose I should ever have said that a man without education is *a field flower* whilst I am *a hothouse flower?* No, no, believe me, Princess, I never could have said, or thought, that a man was a flower. I reserve these images for a different sex.

"Pray accept, Princess, this final expression of a respect which I shall have no further occasion to express.

"SAINTE-BEUVE."

Mathilde had no such scruples as regards a sceptic, being herself a frank free-thinker. Sainte-Beuve's wit was as necessary to her as her daily bread, as well as his colossal memory, his expressive speech, and his unique grasp of every conception of the intellect and every convolution of the imagination and the heart.

In her salon there were many, like the ironical Mérimée, or the ill-natured de Goncourts, who never forgave the author of the *Causeries du lundi* for not writing in the *Moniteur* the much-coveted article about themselves;[1] mocking spirits who spent their time in picking to

[1] They wrote on March 22, 1869: "We go constantly to see Sainte-Beuve, who is inclined to write a critical article on our novel, little as it is to his taste. And for a whole hour he will keep us while he preaches an acid sermon, saying the same thing over and over again, with occasional bursts of childish fury."

Elsewhere, speaking of their sketch of Sainte-Beuve, whom they riddle with shot and describe with a venomous pen, they defend themselves from the charge of yielding to any petty spite in painting him so black and so unfavourably, since they had rather cause to be pleased with the critic; but they acknowledged, *tout bonnement* (what an adverb to employ under the circumstances!), that they had yielded to their taste for analysis, their desire to carry as far as possible the psychology of a very complex individuality, etc. What more could they have said if they had felt any personal enmity for the man whom they thus so roundly abuse!

And yet Sainte-Beuve, in his *Lettres à la Princesse*, though far from being a credulous or ingenuous soul, never wearies of singing the praises of his friends the Goncourts, those dear, excellent Goncourts!

pieces the moral and physical characteristics of the great writer, criticizing the man, his weaknesses, his fads, his affectations in dress, which caused him to select light, youthful, and spring-like colours, his secret sensuality, and his clever, treacherous pen. Absent or present, Sainte-Beuve's name was in everybody's mouth.

"Sainte-Beuve is ill," Mérimée would say; "but he has a number of women round him, just as if he were quite himself."

"When I hear Sainte-Beuve dealing with a dead man in his little, short phrases," remarked Jules de Goncourt, "I seem to see the ants besieging a corpse; he will clear out a glorious reputation in ten minutes."

"Sainte-Beuve," observed another, "is always discussing love. But what does he actually love? Nothing, unless it is his books and a comfortable life."

A fourth, Frédéric Soulié, draws the following amiable picture of the critic:—

"There are actually two Sainte-Beuves: the Sainte-Beuve of his room upstairs, of his library—the student, philosopher, and wit; there is also quite a different Saint-Beuve, the Sainte-Beuve of the ground floor, of the dining-room, of the household, with his mistress, his cook Marie, and his two housemaids. In these humble surroundings Sainte-Beuve becomes a man, wholly indifferent to the aspects of life on a higher plane, a kind of small tradesman on a holiday; the intellectual man bringing himself down to the lowest level and adapting himself to the garrulity of a parcel of women."

Thus every one added his mite to the general panegyric, and a happy time was spent at Saint Gratien at the expense of the critic, tied to his hermitage in the Rue Montparnasse by the series of articles which appeared every Monday. The Princess listened, smiled, and continued none the less to appreciate at his just valuation the Montaigne of the century and of her salon. She also

PRINCESS MATHILDE
(From the bust by Carpeaux.)

reflected that if the writer found his chief enjoyment in intellectual pleasures, he was still of flesh and blood like *les petits saints* who belittled him in her presence, and she passed judgment on them too. With equal assurance she placed him on a level with the sages of Greece in the art of word painting, in which she strove to imitate him.[1] She thought of him continually; she lavished kindnesses on him, and made it impossible for him to forget her, by filling his little house with trifling souvenirs and with presents as useful as they were tasteful.[2]

Their minds were in constant communion. If he was not actually present at her table, chatting or telling her stories, he was writing her from a distance some of his delicious *Lettres à la Princesse*, in which he would touch on topics of burning interest at the moment, giving Mathilde the pleasure of hearing a little sly abuse of the Empress, or playing to perfection the rôle of literary adviser, advising her what to read, inciting her to write, and occasionally correcting her faults of style. Often she would continue their written or spoken conversation at his own house, his "Abbey of Thelema," where she visited quite simply, as a friend.

[1] See heading of *Indiscretions et Souvenirs*, published by J. Troubat.

[2] "I cannot turn round in my little study," he writes to her December 31, 1862, "without catching sight of some fresh gift, some picture. Nor take a step in my little home, nor drop into a comfortable chair without perceiving that I am surrounded with tokens of gracious and ingenious kindness." The *Lettres à la Princesse* are full of thanks given at length for annual or passing mementoes such as the good Princess loved to lavish on him: a writing-stand clock (xxii.), a warm and handsome bedspread artistically embroidered (xxiii.), a water-colour from her own hand, copied from one of Chardin's pictures (lix.), a handsome lamp which even when not lighted had the effect of illuminating the dark sitting-room, a small table of wonderful Turkish or Persian work, gold buttons for master and servants (xcvii.), a comfortable easy chair (cxl.), a locket for the little cook Marie, a ring for the housekeeper Madame Dufour (cliii.), a magnificent carpet (clxxxiv.), and a number of other articles of which we know nothing.

In the eighteenth century Madame de Tencin used to send to each of her friends at the New Year two ells of velvet to make a pair of breeches; she showed less tact and variety than the Princess.

In such a moment of mental expansion Sainte-Beuve drew his portrait of Princess Mathilde, filling in the picture with all the skill and refinement of a pastellist. An English publisher, Gleaser, who was bringing out a book on the Imperial Family, wanted to have a few pages from the pen of the illustrious writer. Sainte-Beuve always put off gratifying him. Then Mathilde came down to his suburban villa. She posed for Sainte-Beuve just as some noble lady of the eighteenth century might have done for La Tour; he made his notes while he watched her and incited her to talk; thus he caught all the shades of her mind with the extraordinary clearness of vision peculiar to this literary anatomist. In friendly revenge Mathilde in her turn drew from her memory, and from her soul, a sketch of her portrait painter.

From time to time she used to accept invitations to dinner with him. In his quiet little street, all villas and gardens, and at that time innocent of pavement—the rumble of a carriage meant the arrival of Prince Jérôme or Princess Mathilde, with one or two other guests of the evening. The numbers at these dinners were restricted like the space. There were never more than five or six for fear of suffocation. But even Socrates would have found his house large enough to entertain those few! Sainte-Beuve generally paid them the compliment of asking them to choose their own company.[1] Thus on the occasion of the celebrated dinner of April 10, 1868, the Good Friday dinner, which had been arranged to please Prince Napoleon on the eve of his departure for Pran-

[1] Witness this invitation, dated May 25, 1866:—

"PRINCESS,—My party then shall be on Wednesday next. I am writing to Monsieur de Nieuwerkerke. I am also telling Monsieur de Girardin, but it is for you, Princess, to give him a formal invitation. I spoke to Monsieur Giraud yesterday. This makes six; the little room, happy and full, cries: *Enough!*

"I am yours, Princess, with respect and devotion,

"SAINTE-BEUVE."

gins, the list included the names of Flaubert, Taine, Renan, Charles Robin, About, all friends of Jérôme. On such great occasions the whole of the little house would be upside down. Sainte-Beuve, with the coquetry peculiar to him, would sprinkle the floor with eau-de-Cologne, to take away the smell of the ink, as he used to say; Marie, the little cook, would usher these illustrious guests into the dining-room, where a dinner was served "such as a vicar might prepare for the entertainment of his bishop." The talk would begin with the soup. I must leave it to my readers to imagine what it must have been like with such men at the table as Nieuwerkerke, Dr. Veyne, Phillips the surgeon (the stone-breaker, as the great operator for bladder diseases used to call himself), Giraud, Madame Espinasse, and the two Goncourts, whose wits were more biting than their teeth. Jérôme Napoleon, a great friend of Sainte-Beuve's, was never more brilliant than at his house. As for Mathilde, she was always in her gayest frame of mind at these bachelor parties; it was as though she had set out with the object of enlivening them to the best of her ability.

Such were the bonds of warm sympathy and friendship between Charles Sainte-Beuve the writer and Princess Mathilde. But one day, quite suddenly, these bonds suffered a violent and noisy rupture. The cause of the quarrel was wholly political. For some time past the Princess had noticed with growing displeasure that Sainte-Beuve was receiving some of the bitterest enemies of the Empire, such as Scherer, Nefftzer, Hébrard. His attitude in the Senate, his speeches, his increasingly liberal tendencies, his conversion to the Left—in a word, his gradual secession from the Napoleonic school of thought, deeply offended the ardent Imperialism which was hers by right of birth. An article by him, which appeared in the *Temps*, hastened the crisis. There was a violent scene between them in Sainte-Beuve's study,

whither she had instantly flown in a state of great excitement and wrath. Hard words were said, both then and afterwards in her own house, words, however, less bitter than the Goncourts would have us believe from the exaggerated account given in their journal. No doubt there were charges of ingratitude, bursts of indignation, and regrettable recriminations. Her anger at what she considered a betrayal of her friendship died out at last. Mathilde tried to forget. Sainte-Beuve sought consolation in philosophy for human inconstancy.

He was, however, drawing near his end, and his physical sufferings were great. The disease which had been undermining his constitution for some months made great headway in the course of this year. She knew it, and remembered only the friend of years whom she was soon to lose irrevocably. Forgetting her wrongs, whether real or fancied, she wrote for news to his devoted friend and confidant, Jules Troubat. On receipt of his bulletin, wholly medical, dictated and transmitted by Dr. Veyne, she replied. The letter, in which her tender anxiety was plainly visible, was brought to Sainte-Beuve. He too replied. The last lines he ever wrote on his death-bed were dictated to Jules Zeller for Mathilde. He died reconciled to the Princess on 13 October, 1869.

We are far from having exhausted the list of familiar faces in the ever-changing circle which surrounded Princess Mathilde.

Flaubert's place was always laid at the table amongst the great men. He brought there all his native exuberance. One afternoon he took his friend Louis Bouilhet with him to introduce to the Princess. But what unfortunate inspiration had come to the Norman poet at lunch that day? Certainly he had not feasted on rose leaves. Some one banteringly remarked that a whole omnibus from the South must have passed in the neigh-

bourhood. Nieuwerkerke, horrified, went upstairs and said, "There's a poet downstairs who smells of garlic!" It was eight or ten days before Flaubert heard the last of it at Saint Gratien.

Méry, too, often appeared on the scene, a witty talker, with a curiously subtle imagination, but not attractive in person, with his vulgar cast of features, and his pale "blind-looking eyes," as the Goncourts cruelly describe him. The "kind hostess" of the place was an old friend of his, and he used to recall with pleasure his first meeting with Jérôme's daughter, describing with enthusiasm the candid beauty of the young girl in her riding-habit as she appeared on horseback in Florence at the age of fourteen.

Now and again Alfred Arago would catch the attention of the company with his rather coarse humour, silencing the more refined and incisive wits. He would jest and banter, attacking first one and then another. The other guests would retire from the conversation. Mérimée on such occasions would draw in his horns and maintain a sulky silence.

Octave Feuillet, then at the height of his popularity; Alphonse Daudet, in all the vigour of his productive youth; Caro—these were constant visitors. There was a perpetual coming and going of company, including as few politicians as possible, but the intellectual men of the day in batches; artists on Sundays, from sunset on Saturday to sunset on Monday, and writers on Wednesdays. Thursdays were kept for members of her family, usually represented by the Count and Countess Primoli; the rest of the week belonged to her intimate friends.

Every possible subject was discussed at her table—politics occasionally, if some important event had forced itself upon the attention of the public, religion sometimes, preferably, however, literature and art. She was not con-

tent to lead and give the tone to the talk; she did not shrink from the fire, but courageously took her share in every battle of words.

On politics, as on all other topics, her opinion was generally founded on impulse and sentiment. She was very feminine in this respect. During the Crimean War, being inclined to Russia by her sympathies, family ties, and personal sentiment, she never forgave the Emperor for the English alliance. Everything English, like everything made in England, was *a priori* detestable in her eyes. Another peculiarity of hers was her hatred for Austria; nor did she love Rome and the papists any better. In reality, Mathilde's political views were never very far-reaching. It may be said without disrespect to her memory, that in this respect her brother Jérôme's intelligence was vastly superior to her own.

As to her convictions, had she indeed any well-grounded system of philosophy? It would be hazardous to say definitely that she had. She was not greatly interested in religious questions; but no one ever took less pains to conceal her lack of sympathy for the clergy. Before guests or servants, in private or in public, she spoke with the utmost freedom of the priesthood in general, and of the Pope and the *Sacré Collège*. In principle she was opposed to every form of superstition, every kind of intellectual slavery. Ernest Renan, Sainte-Beuve, and the school of the Café Magny need have taken no pains to veil their doctrines before her; she would have been wholly at one with them when they gave rein to their sceptical reasoning.

But, an artist herself, she was best pleased when the conversation worked round to her favourite topic. She had perhaps more enthusiasm than real knowledge, more fervour than cultivated taste. This was proved when her picture-gallery was sold: incomparable as regards works of the old masters, but very mixed as to modern

examples.[1] She had a great admiration for Italian art of the sixteenth century, because she had been brought up in Italy to admire it. As regards other periods she was somewhat narrow. There were departments of art, such as engraving, which she completely ignored. Some great artists she failed utterly to appreciate. She always affected the greatest contempt for Eugène Delacroix. In her opinion the man was bad and mad, and ought to have been suppressed. In her prejudiced eyes he had no merit whatever.

Yet her passion for art and artists was very sincere. The most celebrated artists formed part of her immediate circle. She undertook, with all the zeal of a propagandist, to impart her æsthetic cult to the Emperor, who endeavoured to acquire a veneer of knowledge, and to the Empress, who painted a little in water colours. Her infectious enthusiasm made the art of painting fashionable in society.

"Every one has his own artist nowadays," she wrote. "My solicitor has his, namely, Corot."

From her, the fashion spread throughout society. Every great lady adopted some artistic pastime, just as now they all attempt literary work, fiction, or verse. Outside France all the Hohenzollerns painted. I have seen an album full of heads, sketches, landscapes. Princesse de Metternich—that ambassador's wife of world-wide reputation—dabbled in art when she had a moment's leisure, also the Marquise de Contades, and, as we have just said, the Empress.

Mathilde cherished a very high idea of her own talents. To touch upon them adversely in her presence, either by

[1] At this sale, the proceeds of which amounted to over a million francs, there were some great surprises. A portrait of a man by Perronneau, for which the Princess Mathilde had paid only 120 francs in 1865, when eighteenth-century work was far less fashionable, was now knocked down to the Count de Camondo for the sum of 110,000 francs. Pictures by Porbus, Reynolds, Van Dyck, fetched prices worthy of their fame. On the other hand, some modern works which she had valued highly went for next to nothing.

forgetfulness or clumsiness, was sufficient to excite her haughty displeasure. Nieuwerkerke was one of the first to experience this. He once remonstrated with her for compromising herself by exhibiting two water-colours. Would she, thrice a princess, risk being included in the doubtful corporation of artists? She immediately lost her temper.

"Know," she said hastily, "that I am not one of those who are prouder of having a chamberlain's key sewn to their coat-tails than of the distinction accorded to real merit."

The retort struck home, for her dear friend Nieuwerkerke had just donned the red coat of chamberlain, having received this appointment the day before.

Her artistic tendencies affected her language, for she liked to adopt the cant phrases of the studio. Her mode of thought and of writing, in which she always sought the vivid, highly coloured note, and even her style of dress, betrayed the same feeling for tone and colour, for she chose her gowns with the eye of the colourist.

We cannot sufficiently emphasize the fact that unaffectedness and spontaneity of gesture and speech formed the expression of her nature. She made the happiest hits in conversation without effort. The Princess's sallies, with their touch of brusqueness, their combination of virile decision and feminine delicacy peculiar to herself, were the delight of her circle. She did not always let herself go in her conversation. Conscious of an audience of clever people, she could not wholly resist the temptation of outdoing herself, as on that afternoon when she made the subtle remark to a group of smart women that many of them had voices to match the material of their gowns, such as silken voices, velvety voices, etc. The saying was naturally applauded as showing great penetration. And in the same way, knowing that she was as closely watched as she was listened to, she posed as being natural until she ceased to be so.

BARON AND BARONESS P. DE BOURGOING.—COUNT AND COUNTESS O. ALGUADO

Trifling defects, however, scarcely perceptible in one of the least affected of women, in a hostess who was most self-forgetful, and as attentive to those she entertained as she was accessible to freedom of speech.

Wherever women meet, or a woman presides as a hostess, the conversation will readily drift towards sentiment and love. A great deal of speculation on these subjects went on in Princess Mathilde's house. In these matters her views were easy or indulgent, according to the circumstances or the person in question. A friend of hers, with whom we are well acquainted, was about to marry for the second time. The match was notoriously imprudent; the lady risked her name, her position, and her fortune.

"You are in love with him," Mathilde wrote to her; "he is good-looking and he pleases you; keep him at your side, but do not marry him."

The guests at her table readily subscribed to this point of view. So many novelists, poets and followers of the easy and pleasant life met there that the eternal feminine was never lost sight of for long. Mérimée and Sainte-Beuve both excelled on this topic—especially that epicurean Sainte-Beuve, who talked of love like a scholar and practised it like a sensual *bourgeois*.

Once started on this track, light stories were soon bandied about. A little tale founded as much as possible on the gossip of the day; what people said or supposed about some love affair which had been unluckily found out. Viel-Castel always had a large supply of such tales on hand. One evening in January, 1852, he expounded the real cause of the recent separation of Monsieur and Madame de Chaponay, a case which was interesting the public. All ears were tingling to hear the pretext for this curious case. Madame de Chaponay complained of her husband's cruelty, because he expected too much from her in the way of conjugal duties. The lawyers engaged

on either side were to plead the case on the following Friday. At the Princess's table the guests amused themselves by finding arguments for and against the parties to the suit.

Such a theme was calculated to carry the speakers rather beyond bounds. Although far from being prudish, the Princess knew how to indicate by a word or sign the limits beyond which none might venture. I have been told that on one occasion she was disgusted by some too realistic figure of speech from the lips of Edmond About. He abused the licence which she allowed her guests. Perhaps he considered himself privileged because of her affection for him in the past. But in that case she was obviously the more annoyed. She rang the bell.

"Order Monsieur Edmond About's carriage," she said.

There, as elsewhere, much foolish and sentimental talk went on. The Goncourts, in their diary, have preserved an example of this table-talk. A small party had gone to lunch at Trianon with the Princess. Towards the end of the meal she sought to draw out her guests by asking those on either side of her what they most valued as a memento of a woman. Each mentioned his particular fetish. One liked a letter; another a ringlet; another, more ingenuous, liked a flower; Jules de Goncourt, more definite than the rest, preferred a child. All cried shame on the bold man, when Amaury-Duval, with the smiling and victorious air he always put on whenever he spoke of this subject, recalled them all to the serious side of the question. The thing he loved and wanted from women was a glove, at once the imprint and mould of the hand, the object which reproduces her fingers.

"You do not know," he continued, "what it is like to ask a woman, perhaps during dinner, for her glove and to be refused. Then an hour later you see her at the piano. She takes off her gloves to play, and you are unable to take your eyes off them. Then she rises and

leaves them both behind her. But you do not want to take them—and besides, a pair of gloves is not like one glove. At last, just as every one is going away, the woman returns and picks up only one. Then at this little sign that she gives it to you, you are happy, happy indeed!"

He almost wept as he said this, with his nose in his plate, moved partly by the wine and partly by his imaginary passion, whilst the audience smiled at his outburst, amused at its unexpectedly Petrarchian ending!

They did not always float in this blue ether. Sometimes other questions would be raised, closer to reality. At another luncheon—at Saint Gratien this time—some one suggested that at a certain age we must all abdicate and wear mourning for the pleasures of youth. Those who did not feel they had reached the fatal age approved the idea. But older men like Giraud and Sainte-Beuve, the veterans of the table, protested. There was manifestly an error of judgment here. The critic developed his favourite theme in his unctuous and lisping voice:—

"You must not, of course, ask the love of a young woman, but merely the charity of her love, and then act in such a way that, being neither handsome nor young (this was his own case), she will at least put up with you and harbour no dislike for you. That, alas! is the utmost you can demand."

"But did you ever really love, Monsieur Sainte-Beuve?"

"Listen, Princess. Somewhere in my brain—I do not know exactly where—there is one pigeon-hole I never dare to open. My work and everything I do is done with the object of keeping it closed. I have stopped it up and buried it under books in such a way that I need never think of it and can never have free access to it. You cannot imagine what it is like to know that you can never be loved, because it would be impossible, unspeakable—because, as they were saying just now, you

are old and would look ridiculous—because you are ugly!"[1]

"And you, Giraud?"

"Oh, Princess," replied the artist, an incorrigible old man with a turn of the tongue worthy of Rabelais, and quite incapable of sentiment, "I have never had one love—always two or three at least; that is the only way to lead a quiet life and to be free from the torment of fearing lest you should lose one."

"Oh, but what kind of women could they be?"

"Quite possible women."

Sainte-Beuve intervened, hastening to the assistance of his contemporary.

"Do you not know, Princess?" he said. "Then ask these gentlemen, Messieurs de Goncourt. In the eighteenth century there were private societies which supplied women like that—societies of the moment."

"Yes," said Giraud, encouraged by the support of the critic; "yes, imagine women furnished by such companies, and who in society recognize each other at the first glance and understand one another at a sign."

"Stop," said the Princess; "you are disgusting. Oh, you wretch!"

As if to thank her for a compliment, our courtier knelt to kiss Mathilde's hands; but she drew back, finding on reflection this gallantry but little to her taste.

In matters of this kind she had certain peculiar susceptibilities. She often lamented the disillusionments some of her friends caused her. Inwardly she suffered a kind of personal slight from their masculine weaknesses. She admired their acknowledged talents, their lofty conception of art, their broad intellectual views. But it hurt her to

[1] J. de Goncourt, who relates this confession, has probably considerably changed its form, but there is no doubt that the hardened old bachelor and impenitent theorist, who was ever importuned, in his most serious work, by the *odor di femina*, did think and feel in this way.

think that when they stripped off the mantle of ceremony they wore in their books, they showed themselves devoid of principles as of ideals, abandoned to all kinds of petty and vulgar passions, without distinction or selection. It was a common thing for her guests to leave her aristocratic house and repair to the "Closerie des Lilas," the "Château des Fleurs," or some such equivocal place of rendezvous.

"Yesterday we went to a reception at the Princess Mathilde's," write the authors of *Germinie Lacerteux* in their Journal; "to-day we go to a people's ball at the Elysée des Arts, Boulevard Bourdon. We like these contrasts. In this way we see society on every plane."

They found good reasons for so doing. The pleasure was different, less refined, no doubt; but was there not some artistic compensation? Was not this the genuine street, the joyous hurly-burly, the Parisian Gavarni? Thus they explained and excused themselves. But the Princess combated this point of view. She hated to admit that her choicest friends liked to racket (as she put it) with such women. And she classed in the same category the adventuress, the parvenu of gallantry, and the patricians of love at a price. Hébert, the artist, who was nicknamed by one of the wags of the household "the sweep of the ideal," was engaged on a portrait of one of these ladies, and consulted the Princess about it. She was indignant that an artist of his talent should work for one so impure.

"A hussy like that patronizing art! You cannot even take your mother to her house to see these paintings."

"Come, come, Princess, do not be so severe!"

"The question, to my mind, is a very simple one. Do what you will for these ladies so long as it is gratis, but the moment it is a question of money . . ."

Then, trying to find some one to agree with her she turned to Frédéric Soulié.

"Do you not think so, too?" she asked him.

"No, not at all. I maintain that the painter of madonnas, the divine Raphael himself, would have worked for any woman of his times just like the rest of us. But you should not consult me on a point of that kind. I have no principles whatever."

This retort put the finishing touch to the Princess's vexation. She left the room to make herself ready to go into town, saying as she went—

"Really, gentlemen, you are so lenient, that if I ever returned to the world, you would make me wish to be a woman of temperament, a jade, myself."

There was nothing she so keenly regretted as the fact that she had to share the society of superior men with creatures so inferior, and that they should rob her of their time, their intellect, and their personal worth.

Mathilde's cheerful kindliness and simple charm of manner won for her a number of intellectual friends. The world credited her with others still more dear—Monsieur de Pierres, the Count d'Ayguesvives, Nieuwerkerke, Chaplin, and many whose names are as uncertain as the degree of favour to which "the good Princess" raised them.

Nieuwerkerke is the most authentic of those who shared her heart. He was descended in a direct line from the race of Don Juan. He was known to be a great breaker of women's hearts. He used softly to lament that he was "the prey of women." The Princess's deep affection for him contributed largely to his exceptional success. A high official position, large emoluments, a round of pleasure for which he had to thank the caprices of some of the loveliest and most envied women in the realm—such was his lot in life.[1]

With her frank and open nature, Princess Mathilde did not hide either her preferences or her phases of more

[1] See Frédéric Loliée, *La Séduction*, pp. 201–3.

passionate feeling. In her immediate surroundings a veil of mystery was flung round an intimacy which was an open secret. On both sides there was a serene imprudence which lent itself to gossip. It follows that there was no lack of occasion. There were little trips to Dieppe, scarcely concealed beneath a double incognito which was very badly kept up, and which gave the busybodies an inexhaustible subject of scandal. The Emperor plainly showed his displeasure; certain people hoped it might lead to the speedy disgrace of Nieuwerkerke, and a chance for the succession to his post at the Beaux-Arts. Confident in his usual luck, secure in the present and the future, he did not allow these things to disturb him in the least. He took up his quarters openly in a cottage at Breteuil, with his footman, his grooms, and horses. This was sufficient to stir up gossip afresh. On July 1, 1853, the Princess sent him this little note, pressing him to come soon:—

"Your quarters are ready for you in my pavillon. Come as often as you can."

He accepted the invitation without giving a second thought to what jealous, envious, or idle people might say. There was no end to the remarks of some, or to the spitefulness of others. All agreed that Nieuwerkerke displayed an extraordinary want of prudence. He acted as if he were indeed the master of the house; he concealed nothing. Was he not even seen one day walking at St. Cloud with the Princess, under the very eyes of the Emperor, wearing an unceremonious linen coat? He went in and out of the drawing-room like the master or the husband. Was not all this sufficient to prove the relations that existed between them—relations, moreover, which the Princess took no pains to conceal? In high quarters there was obviously great displeasure, but the lower ranks of society were delighted. The Emperor and Empress showed their annoyance. The officers of the Imperial household and the Empress's ladies-in-waiting

received instructions to abstain from attending the Princess's parties. During that year Eugénie went only on one occasion. The Duchesse d'Albe did not even send her card. There was no question about it, a storm was gathering. However, it did not burst. Nieuwerkerke continued to trust to his star, to make careless love to King Jérôme's daughter, and to send amiable replies to the scented notes which he constantly received. It was not his fault ; it was impossible for him to resist all the opportunities given him of deceiving the Princess.

Seated one morning in his quarters at the Louvre, he received a letter from her, which had not passed through the hands of Her Highness's secretaries—a sweet private epistle. In all simplicity he began to read passages from it aloud to Viel-Castel, the least trustworthy of confidants. In a few affectionate words she told him with touching sincerity how much she had felt their long separation, the irksomeness of her loneliness of heart, even in the midst of the Court, her anxiety to get back as soon as possible to her beloved home, to her own ways, her affections, perhaps even to her few enemies, she added, thinking probably of Viel-Castel and others. Suddenly, as if struck by something he had forgotten, Nieuwerkerke put aside the letter and rang for his servant. When the man stood before him, he said, "Ask Monsieur Moissenet to write to Mademoiselle Mignerot[1] and say that I shall expect her at noon." The man withdrew with a smile of under-

[1] This Mademoiselle Mignerot was a very good-looking person, who came with great regularity to paint at the Louvre, where all visitors used to stop and admire not her work, but herself. At intervals she used to leave her easel and repair to Nieuwerkerke's private room to ask his advice *tête-à-tête*.

It was in his rooms at the Louvre that Nieuwerkerke used to give the popular parties, which were attended for the most part by the Princess's circle. The setting was no ordinary one. The visitors' wraps used to be placed in the miniature-room ; the pastel-room was turned into a music-room. Parties artistic and also serious—or at least which began by being serious, though they were apt to end in masculine conversations which were anything but edifying.

MME. CANROBERT, WIFE OF THE FIELD-MARSHAL

standing. The secretary wrote the letter; it was carried at once to its destination, and the young beauty must have lost no time in setting out, for a few minutes after noon she was received in the private room of the Governor-General of the Museums of France, Minister of Fine Arts, member of the Emperor's household and of the Institute. Let us leave them in peace. There will be plenty of time two or three hours hence to answer the Princess's letter. "Poor Princess!" sighs the kindly apostle Viel-Castel.

Nieuwerkerke was too thoroughly spoilt by his good fortune to believe himself capable of the slightest ingratitude. Was he not expected at Compiègne that very day by the handsome Madame Agut, whose medallion he had exhibited the preceding year? How could one expect constancy from a man so much in request?

Mathilde had one other great affection in her life. This was for Chaplin the engraver, a sensitive and tender nature, who gave her profound gratitude and an attachment which knew no limits. His loss was a real grief to her.

To all her friends, whether they appealed to her heart or her intellect, she responded with the warmest sympathy and a devoted enthusiasm. Her supple friendship adapted itself to the whims and tastes of the poets, artists, dreamers—men of varying and difficult moods—whom she had taken into her affections. She had special indulgence for some, and showed it in the happiest way. One night at dinner Jules de Goncourt entirely lost his temper during a discussion regarding the personality of Franck, a philosopher liberal in doctrine and Israelite by race. The Princess shrugged her shoulders and said his opinion was of no consequence—that he was not responsible for his words, which must be charitably ascribed to his liver complaint. He was naturally offended, and the following day, when she again eulogized Franck before him, he turned upon her in one of his uncontrollable fits

of nervous and feverish irritability, and said, to the stupefaction of the rest of the guests: "Well, Princess, the only thing left to you to do is to become a Jewess." The words had scarcely passed his lips when he regretted them, and, impulsive, nervous being that he was, rushed at once to the other extreme. The tears sprang to his eyes and fell down upon the hands of Mathilde, who, overcome by his emotion, put her arms round him and kissed him on both cheeks, saying: "Why, of course I forgive you. You know I care for you. I am just as nervous and feverish myself lately with all that is happening in politics." She seemed, as she spoke, to adopt the acute, nervous irritation of the man at her side. With Gautier, who suffered in the same way, she adopted "the exotic sense," which she found necessary with a man continually possessed with the nostalgia for places where he was not, and times which he had never known.

She showed an astonishing warmth and combativeness in defence of those who had found the way to her heart; her decision in such cases never wavered; she would hear no reason; she brushed aside whatever might be urged against them, and fought their battles with the utmost obstinacy. "Everything for those you love, nothing for those who do not love you." This was the motto on which she acted, and although by no means the ultimate expression of equity or philosophic impartiality, it characterizes her very fully.

She gave touching little instances of her kindly prejudices. In the last years of the Empire a doubtful play of Emile de Girardin's was given in Paris, *Les Deux Sœurs*, which had a short and disastrous career. The piece was discussed at her house. Mathilde could not bring herself to admit that the public had hissed the play, but stoutly maintained that her dear Girardin had achieved a magnificent success. And with the *Henriette Maréchale* of the de Goncourts it was still worse. It was

she who induced the Comédie Française to accept the play, and she did all in her power to get it well received, but notwithstanding her efforts it was an utter failure. The critics were merciless. The first and following nights there was a terrible uproar in the theatre. She received a number of threatening letters on the subject of this play, which was openly produced under her patronage. Nevertheless, on December 5, 1865, she came home from the theatre with her gloves in ribbons and her hands burning from the warmth of her applause.

Meanwhile the round of brilliant receptions given by the Emperor's cousin went on uninterruptedly, and there was nothing to indicate that their end was nigh. Suddenly they ceased. The pause was fatal. The breath of a violent storm extinguished the torches and scattered the guests.

When the whirlwind of 1870 broke over France, some of those friends on whom Mathilde had heaped her delicate attentions were able to show her that they were not ungrateful or forgetful in that critical moment. Thus Alexandre Dumas the younger, to whose daughters she had ever been a generous friend and who cherished a real affection for her, took infinite pains to preserve the pictures and art furniture belonging to the Princess from the attacks of the Communist incendiaries.

In the subsequent violent reaction, when the fallen dynasty was execrated by the masses, Mathilde of all the Imperial Family was the one who suffered least. Naturally she did not escape entirely. Some of the mud thrown reached her. A pamphlet appeared in Brussels in 1870 which was full of invectives directed against her whom they nicknamed the "Poppæa" of the last reign. Insinuations of different kinds were made against her private life and her morals. Only very faint echoes were heard, however. Mathilde, with her generous mind, her frank, open nature, could not have deserved hatred. How could

Paris be otherwise than friendly to her whose rôle had ever been that of an intellectual benefactor?

She was able at last to reopen her house to her old friends. The friendship of Thiers left her free to continue to reside in France, and she left the Rue de Courcelles to establish herself in the Rue de Berry. Here, in her new home where everything remained "Second Empire," in the large red damask salon where Canova's marbles faithfully reproduced the effigies of the Napoleons, she was once more surrounded by men of all political parties. She had not changed, but still preserved the broad-minded tolerance and comprehension which were always the best points in her character and made the charm of her receptions. With her impetuous sentiments, she still clung with profound attachment to the traditions of her family. Those around her knew this. None ventured to interrupt her when she spoke of her memories of the past, and those who were privileged to listen never forgot the impression she made on them when she talked of the mother of the Emperor, of King Joseph, of Lucien Bonaparte, Queen Hortense, and King Louis of Holland, of whom she spoke as though she had only parted from them a few hours before. Simple as she was on all other points, she was very proud of her descent. I will only give one instance of this. King Oscar of Sweden, on one of his visits to Paris, came to see her in the house in the Rue de Berry. He bowed low before her, saying gallantly—

"I could not pass through Paris without presenting to you my homage."

"I accept it as a reparation," replied Mathilde, thinking of Bernadotte's defection.

She never renounced her birthright; she proclaimed it aloud. When Taine with too truthful a pen wrote those scathing pages about the first of the Bonapartes, which caused such consternation among his descendants, she made no attempt to refute his arguments, after the

example of her brother Napoleon; but she broke off all her relations with the author of *Les Origines*, and her salon was shorn of its literary glory. We know the quiet, cutting way in which she dismissed Taine. She sent her card to the celebrated writer, with the letters "P.P.C." written on the top to signify that she thus took leave of their former friendship. The loss was far less for a superior spirit like Taine than for the dilettante Princess. Another incident of the kind is recorded. The son of a personage well known under the Second Empire wrote a series of articles in one of the Paris papers which created a great sensation. They presented in a very unfavourable light the early years of Napoleon III in London, and revealed a number of secrets in the career of the claimant to the throne of France. To this gentleman, Mathilde sent by the hand of a friend a packet of letters. The author of the articles found the name of his own father at the foot of these letters. In pages full of gratitude and devotion the writer thanked Napoleon, who had now passed from exile to the throne, for having saved him once from prison and once from suicide! She was a Napoleon to the tips of her fingers, and was proud of it. Fortunately she had also other qualities. The Imperial eagle, the bees, and the violets were not able to hypnotize her liberal artist's soul. Apart from these instances of open hostility, or of occasional passing annoyance—fits of temper quickly roused and soon spent, as in the case of Sainte-Beuve—she never attempted to impose her point of view on her friends.

At the Rue de Berry it was the same as in the Rue de Courcelles. The most varied elements mingled there under her tactful guidance. Side by side with the diplomatic corps, distinguished foreigners, European princes visiting the capital, the bearers of great names in the fallen Empire, met representatives of some of the oldest families in the former monarchy; there were deputies of the

Centre and the Left, Royalists and Republicans, with pretty women wearing no political cockade. To her old friends—whose number, alas! dwindled with time—she added new-comers of no less distinguished merit or education.

She was herself the link and the central point, the life and soul of the company. Seated in her great salon, richly dressed, her historic pearl necklace round her throat, we see her again in our mind's eye, diffusing the kindly grace of her pleasant manner, and leaving to her guests the utmost freedom of thought and speech. For half a century Princess Mathilde preserved the sovereignty of her charm.

In her later years she seldom left her pleasant home at Saint Gratien, which was always her favourite residence and her usual refuge in the summer season. The entertainments she gave there were as highly appreciated for the distinction of the giver as for the charms or talents of those she gathered around her. Some few weaknesses and singularities apart, this intelligent Princess will be remembered as one who maintained to her last moments the best traditions of the spirit of society.

CHAPTER IV

A GOLDEN-HAIRED AMBASSADRESS
COUNTESS LE HON

I

A great marriage and its consequences—A strange story and simple ending—Monsieur de Morny—Countess Le Hon—Retrospect; her arrival at the French Court as ambassadress—Her portrait—In her box at the opera—Her salon—Correspondence of Philippe, Duke of Orléans—In public and in private—A letter from Vatout—The best years of Countess Le Hon, in her house in the Champs Elysées.

IT was about the month of September, 1856. In certain circles characterized by professional indiscretion, a singular story was going the round, the subject of which was an event, private in nature, but rendered public by the exalted position and wealth of the various parties involved—some political, some diplomatic, and others belonging to the police.

The principal figure in the affair was a very prominent statesman, a man who by a fortuitous train of circumstances had been led to build up with his own hands a fortune no less remarkable. Linked with his name was that of a lady celebrated for her beauty, her brilliant receptions, her rare attainments and sweet disposition, whom the daily papers always placed in the front rank of those who led opinion in Paris. An exchange of letters, magnified by all the circumstances which the public were pleased to add from their own imaginations, had given rise to all this gossip.

At the root of the matter was the marriage—so noisily announced—of Monsieur de Morny, Ambassador Extra-

ordinary of France to the Court of Russia, who had been sent there with much pomp on the occasion of the coronation of Alexander II. Difficulties had arisen out of circumstances of an entirely private nature. Complaints had been lodged. It was said that high personages had been called upon to intervene.

As for his betrothal, every one knew that the Duc de Morny, with his volatile fancy, had opened such negotiations more than once without bringing them to a conclusion. He had narrowly escaped being married in Florence. Before his departure a match had been spoken of with an American, who afterwards became one of the Countesses Moltke; then followed a charming young lady of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle de Bondeville. It was believed that he had once been engaged in England. The banns were to have been published in London, when his engagement to a Russian beauty became known.

This time the engagement was a fact.

He himself announced it in a letter addressed to the Countess Le Hon, written in the style of a prince who considers the fulfilment of his personal joy indispensable to the welfare of his people:—

"St. Petersburg, 1856.

"I am about to be married. . . . The Emperor wishes it and France desires it. Whilst I was in office the police were always saying to me: 'Do marry. . . . Do marry.' I hope and wish that my wife may have no dearer friend than yourself, and that you will not forget the way to Baden. . . .

"MORNY."

Accordingly Monsieur de Morny married for the welfare of France, as he believed, and also for his own. He wedded a young and fair-haired Muscovite princess, with black eyes, delicate features, and an elegant figure, Sophie Troubetzkoï, lady-in-waiting to the Tsarina. They met at a ball at the embassy, and notwithstanding the fact that

COUNTESS LE HON, WIFE OF THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR
(From the painting by Debufe)

he was twice her age, he won her heart at once by his habitual charm of manner.[1]

When the news became known, many high-born Parisian ladies felt themselves forsaken. It called forth protests which had some legitimate foundation from her who had been the good providence of Morny's early ambitions—from the woman who could truthfully say—

"I took him a sub-lieutenant, I leave him an ambassador."

When Countess Le Hon gave him a share in some great financial and industrial combinations, the development and ultimate success of which were assured by her own family and her husband, she placed in De Morny's hands those elements of power and authority which were the prime factors in his subsequent political fortunes. She herself staked in the transaction not only her faith, but her property. A few million francs were swallowed up. Matters had to be looked into.

The protest from Countess Le Hon came back from St. Petersburg to Paris by special courier. Monsieur de Morny had sent off one of his private messengers to place the text in the hands of the Emperor.

Both purport and import of this communication were grossly exaggerated by public rumour. Over-zealous servitors took alarm. They talked as though revelations of the gravest nature might arise from this incident. Unless instant precautions were taken, some weighty secrets might shortly be divulged bearing on the abettors of the *coup d'état.* Already, it was said, some dangerous papers were in the hands of the Orléanist princes; and others

[1] It must also be said she had no fortune. She was the descendant of one of the companions in arms of Rurik, the national hero and founder of the Russian monarchy, and at the time when Morny appeared upon the scene she was prepared to marry the first nobleman who might ask her hand. However, everything turned out for the best in Morny's interests and happiness. The Emperor of Russia gave to the Princess Sophie Troubetzkoï an important dowry in consideration of her marriage with the French Ambassador.

were on their way thither which would cause a most undesirable scandal. All these absurd hypotheses found credence at the Tuileries. The Emperor had said to one of his secret agents—

"Act at once, and act forcibly."

Francesco Piétri, who then occupied the position now held (in 1906) by Monsieur Lépine, was as much excited as though he had discovered some plot against the security of the State. Foolish suppositions led to measures no less extravagant. Several police agents made their way into the house and into the private apartments of Countess Le Hon. One of them, the Corsican *spadassin*, Griscelli, demanded in a grim voice the immediate surrender of the mysterious casket containing the secret and dangerous documents. The famous box, which in reality held only a few letters, was handed to the men by the Countess, and at once taken as a precious booty to Napoleon III's study. Griscelli, who conducted this remarkable undertaking, received six thousand francs reward. Calm was restored. All this disturbance had been made about a delicate question of confused accounts, into which the minister Rouher brought light and order, to the ultimate satisfaction of the Countess Le Hon.[1]

The alacrity and zeal which Rouher brought to his task had the effect of completely severing the friendship of the former lawyer of Riom and future "vice-emperor" with Morny; and we know the fatal effect of this rupture on the stability of the Empire.[2]

[1] Was her satisfaction indeed complete? The gentle ambassadress pretends the contrary. She was deprived of the interest of her capital.

"They give me three millions when they owe me six," she said to Estancelin, who repeated her words to me.

[2] We may remark in passing that Rouher owed his political fortune to Napoleon III's brother, who had singled him out when still a young provincial lawyer and had pushed his claims with the Prince President.

Ill-natured people said that this warmth which he displayed in defending the interests of Countess Le Hon aroused some suspicion in the mind of Madame Rouher, a very amiable woman, though inclined to jealousy.

The affair was long remembered and talked over, by virtue of the passionate interest taken by the public in everything that concerned the person or actions of the Duke de Morny.

But who was the Countess Le Hon? What was her actual rôle, and what share of prestige fell to her lot in the short span of human existence?

She wrote nothing, and never went outside the boundaries of private life. Once, for a moment, she thought of doing so; she began to edit her notes, to recall all that she had observed or felt in the high rank of social distinction which she enjoyed. Then she broke off, checked by diffidence and by a lack of self-confidence which caused her to doubt the range of her own mental powers. In default of private confidences, signed by her own hand, we have had recourse to rare and accurate documents.

The daughter of a wealthy banker of Brussels, named Mosselman, she was married while still very young to Count Charles Aimé Joseph Le Hon, one of the founders of the Belgian monarchy, and for eleven years the representative of King Leopold I at the French Court.[1] This was at a critical period. In those memorable years when the interests of all the Powers of Europe found themselves in conflict, Belgium occupied a foremost rank as the arbiter of peace or war. Her ambassador to Paris had recently brought thither a royal gift. The crown he offered to the Duc de Nemours, a royal prince of France, was, however, declined. The Prince was patriotic enough to prefer the peace of his fellow-citizens to the possession of a throne.

The young Countess Le Hon and her husband had not to make their way back to Brussels. Another candidate, the Prince of Saxe-Coburg, accepted, with the approval of the Powers, the diadem which the Duc de Nemours

[1] Le Hon was the first ambassador to be accredited to a foreign court on the establishment of the kingdom of Belgium.

refused, and he confirmed Count Le Hon in his position as Minister Plenipotentiary. Thus she was destined to remain for long in the French capital.

"What does this foreign crown matter to us," a prince remarked to her, "so long as you stay here?"

She arrived just at the right moment. She found a king without prestige, a court without courtiers, and in all Paris only one or two houses which could be called brilliant. When she came, society in the capital was eagerly scanning the horizon in search of some new star which might illumine the general dullness. Countess Le Hon proved to be that star. To quote Arsène Houssaye, she had only to give one glance, one smile, for all hearts to be enslaved, and in his poetic style he adds:—

"In the meshes of her fair hair she captured the gods and men of the day."

This fascinating woman was, indeed, both very fair and very pretty. "My blue-eyed Iris" she was called by one of her dearest friends, Madame Janvier de la Motte, and also, curiously enough, by the Academician Vatout, but each quite independently of the other.

I once had an opportunity of seeing her portrait by the elder Dubufe at the house of her daughter, Princess Poniatowska: a magnificent work in which she is painted at full length, which was a great help to my imagination. It is seldom that a woman's portrait, with its fixed expression, the undying smile intended for no one in particular, the eyes which never close, but follow the spectator about without seeing him—it is seldom, indeed, that such a passing impression fixed upon canvas ever quite satisfies our imagination. But when a liquid light seems to radiate from the entire picture, illuminating the features and imparting life to the painted image, how different is the impression conveyed. Admiring her there, so life-like, so near—this queen of past gaieties—I could but feel grateful to that divine art which can thus preserve

for other generations these creatures of beauty of which we have been robbed by death. Her portrait presents in adorable guise the feminine ideal of that time, when Dubufe prepared the way for the somewhat conventional graces of Winterhalter; yet there is nothing which dates the picture; neither the dress, the pose, nor the style of the face. She is standing up, bending forward slightly, in a graceful attitude. Her hair is dressed on the top of the head, while a few curls stray lightly over her shoulders. Her whole physiognomy is animated by a youthful and caressing expression. A smile plays in her eyes and on her lips, bringing out the dimples in the warm paleness of her cheeks and chin. In a word, the picture has the charm and perfection of life itself.

Being what she was, she attracted much notice. When Madame Le Hon entered the Opera House, there was a general turning of heads towards the box which she had engaged in 1832, and later towards the celebrated box on a lower tier, where she was surrounded by so many illustrious persons. In the *foyer*, all those who followed the Duc d'Orléans—Count de Morny, the Duc Decazes, the Marquis de la Valette, Baron Thiers—for he was a baron—Camille and Nestor Roqueplan, Saint-Marc Girardin, and all the younger Moderates, eager for social advantages of a less speculative nature—waited attentively on her footsteps.

From her first appearance she had caught the eye and touched the heart of the Duc d'Orléans, the most pleasing and the most popular of the princes of the reigning house. He was extraordinarily gifted, with a mind of unusual calibre. If he had obtained an enormous influence in the army, if he enjoyed great popularity in the country, and was the Mæcenas and friend of artists, he was also the favourite of the queens of society. Autograph letters, which we have been fortunate enough to see, addressed by his own hand to the beautiful ambassadress,

enable us to follow not only the growth of the Prince's affection for her, but also the regard felt for the Countess Le Hon in these aristocratic circles and the attraction she exercised upon them.

No sooner had they met, than the Duc d'Orléans showed her the utmost attention, combined with the most perfect courtesy, and took the greatest pains to win the favour of the graceful stranger. He lost no opportunity of showing her the value he set on her judgment and his anxiety to know her opinion before that of any one else. Every lady and gentleman at Court, even the King, who himself cultivated literature and once composed an opera, possessed some hobby, or adopted some artistic pastime. D'Aumale wielded both sword and pen. Joinville and Nemours the pencil. Princess Marie produced in marble works of lasting merit. The heir presumptive, "Monseigneur d'Orléans," took up painting. Without pretending to any superior talent in this direction, he was not indifferent to tactful praise, and enjoyed a little flattery of his sketches. He was never misled as to the quality of his talent, but it pleased him to be credited with some. With unfeigned modesty, which asked only encouragement, he wrote to Countess Le Hon in the terms of delicate respect from which he never departed, asking for a kind criticism on a little picture of his, upon which he composed this madrigal :—

"I hasten to profit by your kind permission, Madame, to offer you this little water-colour sketch. I ask for my palette the indulgence of which both it and myself stand greatly in need; but I shall console myself, even under the criticism of so good a judge as yourself, if I succeed in drawing your attention for one brief moment to him who now takes this opportunity of renewing his homage.

"FERDINAND-PHILIPPE D'ORLÉANS."

Other letters from the Duke d'Orléans, inspired by less trifling occasions, had taken the same road ere this. The day after Fieschi's attempted crime, he wrote :—

"I am grateful to your heart, Madame, for the feeling it showed for us when you heard of the recent horrible event on the Boulevard du Temple. I recognized that kind and generous heart in the indignation and sympathy which it knew so well how to express. I respond, as ever, with an attachment so sincere that you cannot but count on it under all circumstances, and so respectful that you cannot but accept it.

"PHILIPPE D'ORLÉANS."

The attachment of which the Prince speaks did not always stop short at this reverential and ceremonious tone —at this pure if somewhat chilly zeal. As it deepened, it found expression in a style more direct and personal, I might say more tender, as in these charming lines, which have an additional interest because they complete the portrait of her to whom they were addressed :—

"TUILERIES, *Sunday Morning.*

"You were much talked of last night in the drawing-room, and in terms that were sweet to my heart, for among the many speakers not one found a word of blame or unkindness for you. I cannot tell you how I enjoyed your triumph over the calumnious and critical spirit of our salon ; it made me really happy to see them do you justice, and to know that all that is noble, lofty, and good in you has not passed by unnoticed. Our keenest sensations are in those we love ; we feel their pains far more deeply than our own, and in their joys we take an even larger share than do they themselves. So you can imagine how much pride and self-respect I feel in you.

"FERDINAND-PHILIPPE D'ORLÉANS."

All her critics were vanquished by the gentleness which tempered her queenly air. Women, without much jealousy, yielded to her the palm of beauty, because she was supremely good and it seemed natural that so tender a soul should be expressed in a charming face. She had one strong claim on the affection of all, and a sure talisman to disarm envious passions, in her eagerness to second her friends' wishes. Tokens of this are visible in a number of letters thanking her for some service rendered, or asking for one to come.

To the charms that please, she united those that attract and touch the heart. In private she fascinated every one with her little wilful ways, the pretty inflexion of her voice, the mischief of her laughing eyes. The smile on her lips seemed always reflected in these blue eyes, with their caressing and animated expression. It was impossible to resist her radiant sympathy, and every one felt the need of telling her so in her presence, whether she wished it or not. If she tried to tell a story at table, she would be interrupted at every point by some one anxious to render her a trifling service or to pay her a fresh compliment. She would say with pretty impatience, "Do let me speak," and the saying was almost a byword in her circle. It occurs in a letter which overflows with affection, written in a moment of mingled memories, grave and gay, by one of her friends who had withdrawn to a small country place in Maine-et-Loire for the summer holidays :—

"DEAR COUNTESS,—If I could be there with you, listening to you again some evening, it would be like a re-awakening. One does not appreciate one's pleasures until one has lost them. I can see your smile, your happy eyes, and hear you saying, 'But do let me speak!' I should love to interrupt you and give you a kiss. You are too amiable. Do you know it? We do not tell you so often enough. To possess, as you do, intelligence, taste, and a natural manner, is to possess the supreme charm.

"ADÈLE PERROT (Madame Janvier de la Motte)."

HORTENSE DE BEAUHARNAIS, DAUGHTER OF THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE, WIFE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE, KING OF HOLLAND, AND MOTHER OF NAPOLEON III

If it is true that a woman's beauty expands beneath the compliments of her sex, it is certain that such sweet and rare results were not wanting in the case of Countess Le Hon. She must also have possessed judgment and sagacity, since men of serious attainments took a delight in communicating to her their ideas and preoccupations, both in conversation and in writing. I have under my eyes a bundle of letters written to her by various Belgian ministers, including Van Praët, in which they are not afraid to speak freely to her, as ambassadress, of the most difficult questions of the hour. Later on, between 1855 and 1856, a diplomatist—Thouvenel, the future Minister of Foreign Affairs—keeps her informed from Constantinople of the negotiations then opened with regard to the Eastern question. I might quote many others.

I will not affirm, however, that she did not prefer less serious subjects, such, for example, as we find in the letters of her women friends, who, like Madame Janvier, mingled affection with wit. But at least she took sufficient interest in higher interests to carry on an intelligent correspondence.

By nature she was easy to get on with and cheerful, and she made these qualities felt in her immediate surroundings. Even Guizot's gravity gave way to a smile in her presence. Thiers, leaving the sittings of the Assembly, would resume his southern vivacity in her company. Armand Bertin, the powerful editor of the *Débats*, who influenced royalty and overruled ministers, became at her bidding the most suave of talkers. Had she chosen, Victor de Broglie, at the end of his public career peer of France and Member of the Academy, would have been her humble slave. Did he not once decline an invitation of hers in the following lines, which show a slight uneasiness :—

"You are too kind-hearted to entirely forget a poor lonely man who must be henceforth a stranger to society

and its pleasures, and I wish I could add, to its business also. At a ball I should be like a piece of furniture, displaced and ridiculous; but if you will allow me, I should like to come at a more suitable moment to thank you for your kind remembrance.

"V. DE BROGLIE."

While she invited many political men to her house, she always kept a corner for artists and another for women, where Mesdames Duchâtel, de Liadières, and all the Lafittes, kept the ball of conversation going with sufficient charm to attract such men as Walewski or Morny. There they could chatter amiable gallantry. She was one of the first to take part in it. Had she not also her great men and wits? The Academician Vatout, the "inevitable Vatout," when he was not sentimentalizing with Madame Dosne, held a successful court, seated on a stool in the Countess Le Hon's salon. His talk, if not his person—which, as a matter of fact, was far from attractive—had brought him into favour at her house. He enjoyed a friendly freedom, as may be judged from this fragment of a letter, written when the Countess was taking the waters at Vichy, and Vatout had promised to keep her informed of what was going on in the capital:—

"PARIS, *Thursday, August* 3, 1843,

"On the edge of my bed of pain.

"DEAR AND KIND,—How good of you to think of me; how nice of you to write me four charming pages! Like a true sister of charity, or rather like the angel you are, you took pity on a poor sick man. Heaven bless you!

"I am better, much better. . . . But my doctor is not sufficiently imprudent to send me to Vichy. He knows there is a certain fair-haired Naiad there, whose blue eyes with their soft flame would undo any kind of virtue, including the virtue of the waters. I must therefore cultivate goodness in my alcove, and heaven is my witness

(the heaven over my bed)[1] if I think of anything but to deserve my liberty. What shall I do with it? I ought to go to Egypt; but I have given up the idea, and if God and the King are willing, I shall complete my convalescence in the Château d'Eu.[2] The departure is fixed, I believe, for Monday. It is a fortnight since I was at Neuilly, and I know nothing, except from hearsay.

"They say the Princesse de Joinville is very pretty, and that in feature she is a little like the Princess Marie, and also a little like the Marquise de Loulé. They say that an offer of marriage is to be made in a very high quarter. . . . But . . . well. . . . They say the Duchesse de Nemours and her good looks are very impressive when travelling. . . . You see I am very poor in news. . . . It is only the unexpected which can be said to enrich me, for I am a prisoner in my tub, and show neither the philosophy of Diogenes nor the courage of Regulus. I am Roman in one respect, for I eat, read, and write in a recumbent attitude. Certainly, the king of nations had singular customs; as if beds were made for anything but to sleep in! Vatry told me about your successes. Where, indeed, could you have anything else? A flatterer yesterday was reading at my side a volume of Cellamare, and I smiled at the portrait of Madame d'Avernes, the angel of pleasure.

"Adieu, fair drinker. When will you rise out of the waters, like Venus?

"V. VATOUT."

The tone of the letter is somewhat jesting. But we must not forget that Vatout was in some sort the Voiture of Madame Le Hon's *salon*.

[1] In French the same word *ciel* is used to express heaven and the canopy of a bed.—*Translator's note.*

[2] Vatout had an entry to the Tuileries and to the Château d'Eu under the July Monarchy. Was he not one of the family? A point not generally known is that Vatout was a son of Philippe Egalité, and consequently a brother of Louis Philippe.

His compliments and innuendoes were a change from the weighty conversation of her diplomatic friends.

I have an idea that Monsieur de Montrond, whose best days were then in their last quarter, must also have been a visitor at the Countess Le Hon's. Since the days when he frequented social gatherings, caustic in humour as another Chamfort, and inspiring by his wit even Talleyrand himself, his friends looked to him for smart sayings, good stories, Voltairean acerbities which entertained those present, at the expense of the absent. It was he who watching a quarrel which raged between persons of high rank, remarked with amusement, "How right I was when I said what excellent friends you were!" One day Monsieur de Montrond, whose calm egoism would have made even a Fontenelle jealous, was expecting his friend Monsieur de Sampaye to dinner. The guest did not arrive, however, because he had the misfortune to die on the way. The fatal news was announced to Montrond. He was in the act of carving a truffled partridge. He rose from the table at once, as though to indulge in a violent fit of grief; then he sat down again and ate up the whole of the dainty bird. "Strange," he remarked, "I thought it would have taken away my appetite!" Many similar traits are told of him which do more credit to his head than to his heart.

Madame Le Hon had around her people with quite as keen a sense of humour, but less hard by nature.

The qualities of a hostess show chiefly at her small parties. The Countess, however, never cared to limit herself to the half-lights of a semi-intimacy. She was an excellent stage manager, and loved show and adornment. In 1846 she built the fine mansion at the Rond-point of the Champs Elysées, where so many bright years were spent. Artistic in taste—she occupied herself with painting, sculpture and engraving—full of curiosity and invention, which she exercised for her own pleasure, while interested

in encouraging talent in others,[1] she ordered every detail, suggested the style of decoration, and arranged the interior to please herself. There was not a piece of furniture in the house which she had not either designed, modelled, or rearranged. "I want it in this way," she would say, and described it accurately or furnished a design. This feminine art, this talent of transforming to her liking what wealth threw in her way, of animating with her personal grace the coldness of marble, the lifeless gleam of gold, has been celebrated by one of her guests, Arsène Houssaye, in some unknown lines :—

> Votre palais, madame, est un riche poème,
> Paradis idéal, que le Tasse lui-même
> Eût choisi pour Armide en ses rêves de feu.

Like another high-born and clever lady, Countess de Castellane, she occasionally transformed her drawing-room into a theatre. Some play would then be given before a company, every member of which represented the aristocracy of birth, talent, or beauty.

The dinners she gave regularly on Saturdays enjoyed a great reputation. They were more famous for their luxury and elegance than for the number of the guests, for she limited them to fourteen, rarely exceeding that figure.[2] But they were much talked of in the world.

[1] She greatly patronized Tennyre, the predecessor of Barbedienne. She had a fine picture gallery. In 1859 some of these pictures were sold, notably some choice works, such as *La Sortie de l'Ecole*, by Decamps, and some pictures by Meissonier, who was greatly indebted to her in the opening of his career.

[2] Amongst her constant guests may be cited Morny, the Russian ambassador Kisselef, Estancelin, Monsieur de Montguyon, d'Hobersart, Armand Bertin, Thiers, John Lemoinne, Vatout and Count Léon de Laborde, father of a number of charming women. I came across the following note from the last-named, who was a personage of the Empire, a Member of the Academy, Director of the *Musée des Antiques* at the Louvre, and later Director-General of the Archives, who endeavours to reply wittily to an invitation from the Countess :—

"Dry bread, and you will complete my happiness. Imagine, then,

There was scarcely a house so fashionable as hers, and none to which an invitation was more eagerly sought. Every man in the least distinguished would brood anxiously over the futility of fame if he had not yet acquired the *entrée* to the house at the "Rond-point." Every one in Paris, entitled to wear a decoration, was eager to appear there, to shine either by their own, or by their reflected, light.

This was the moment when her worldly success was at its zenith; but its wane was inevitable.

2

Orléanism and Bonapartism—After the Strasburg incident—A mysterious correspondence between Queen Hortense and the youthful Countess Le Hon—Some unpublished facts concerning the Princess Mathilde—Curious revelations—Under cover of an unknown sister of the Countess Le Hon's Queen Hortense betrayed her uneasiness about her unacknowledged son, Morny—Morny at "the beautiful ambassadress's" before December 2—Strange confidence—A saying of Madame Dosne's—Under the Empire—The wane of Countess Le Hon's fortunes—Her last years.

Countess Le Hon's salon was frankly Orléanist. It had an official character corresponding to the official position of her husband, and also to the personal and royalist sympathies of both of them. The princes and governors of the July Monarchy confirmed its tendency by constantly frequenting the house. Nevertheless, the Countess being a woman—therefore allowing sentiment to outweigh politics—entertained relations and found close ties which might have aroused suspicion in any one whose judgment

with melon and dessert! As for the future cook, I should not permit myself to make any comment; it is too obviously to my interest to stand well with that high official.

"Till to-morrow, dear Madame.

"Your devoted servant,

"De Laborde."

THE DUKE DE MORNY

was less sure than her own. She never proclaimed these relations, but rather concealed them beneath a veil of prudence and discretion, while at the same time she never allowed them to be interrupted. From the beginning of her affectionate interest in the career of young Morny, she maintained a regular correspondence with Queen Hortense.

The originals of these letters of Queen Hortense are now in our hands. It is not without a thrill of imaginative emotion that I handle these yellowing leaves in which an empress's daughter lives, feels, and speaks; a woman who in early youth was brought in contact with incomparable splendour, then thrust aside into a languishing exile, a precarious existence; watching anxiously for the first rays of a dawn she was destined never to see; foreseeing, perhaps, through the heavy mists which shrouded her horizon a marvellous return of fortune and days of sunny radiance ahead. In the background of the picture evoked by her plaintive or anxious confidences, stands the tragic figure of a man who was to know the brightest and darkest extremes of human destiny. Beneath her cryptic phrases, beneath her vague, yet urgent, allusions, emerges another personality no less surprising—that of Morny, the unacknowledged son of a queen, the brother of an emperor, who by an extraordinary sequence of events was to be forced into the position to which his birth entitled him.

At first sight, there is nothing in these letters of Queen Hortense to Madame Le Hon to raise them above the commonplace. The very handwriting is ordinary. The paper covered by this voluminous, but careless, writing is thin and inelegant, devoid of any indication which could betray its origin. But it is to the actual contents we attach importance, because they convey a clear impression of current events, traced by a hand which trembled alternately with tenderness, anxiety, or indignation.

For the most part, these letters belong to the years between 1835 and 1838. These were the troublous, adventurous days of Louis Napoleon's career as pretender, the period more particularly of the extraordinary events at Strasburg.

Not long before, in the course of a journey to Switzerland, the fair-haired Countess had paid a visit to Queen Hortense and made the acquaintance of Louis Napoleon. "Who knows when we may meet again," they said as they took leave of each other. A few days later she found herself at Berne with her lady-companion. In the hotel in which she had taken rooms they were disturbed in the middle of the night by the arrival of unpleasantly noisy neighbours in the next rooms, who walked about, talking and arguing loudly. Were these people there under their real names? She may have had doubts, but it was not until a few years later that she knew for certain. Fialin de Persigny, talking one day to Madame Le Hon, led the conversation back to the past. "Do you remember," he said, "some tiresome neighbours who kept you awake one night at Berne? They were Prince Louis and I. We were on our way to Strasburg."

It is not necessary for us to tell the story of that adventure. Whilst events were leading the Prince to prison and exile, which proved steps to the throne for that enterprising fatalist, his mother was writing long and frequent letters to Countess Le Hon. Apart from the fact that she entertained a sincere affection for her and gave her unlimited confidence, she was perfectly aware of her influential position at Court; she expected much from the Countess's intercession with ministers of the King. She confides to her all her impressions at the moment: personal anxieties about her own life, nervousness about her broken health, and keen uneasiness about her son's actions.

In outward appearance this correspondence was shrouded

in precaution and mystery; it was addressed, *poste restante*, under very ordinary fictitious names—now to Madame Adèle Michaut, now to Madame Catherine Loiset. Apparently they found some danger in the earlier form of address, for one of these letters contains a fresh suggestion in the form of a postscript:—

"Give me your address in Paris, and I will always write there under the name of Madame Catherine; but not *poste restante*, as that always looks suspicious."

We may seek in vain for the seal of the owner of Arenenberg, and she advised the Countess to be equally careful in this matter.

"Your little seal," she says, "does very well, because there is nothing engraved on it."

She signs in different ways: Adèle R——, or by an illegible monogram, or by a dot and nothing more. Persons are spoken of in such a way that they cannot be mistaken, so clear are the descriptions; but names are in every case carefully suppressed. One needs to be well informed beforehand, or else to have the key to these allusions, in order fully to understand to whom, or to what, reference is made. Titles and relationships are alluded to under a sort of code arranged between Queen Hortense and the ambassadress, whom she never addresses as "My dear Countess" or "My dear friend," but always as "My dear niece" in the Breton or Belgian fashion. She gives her strict injunctions to use the same form of address in replying:—

"I certainly am your sincere friend; call me therefore by this name. But I think in your letters it would be better to put 'my aunt,' and tell your sister[1] to do so too. In this way we can safely keep our letters, and if ever yours should fall under strange eyes, they would appear really to come from a *niece* whom I love dearly."

[1] We shall see presently who this so-called *sister* was.

She was so keenly anxious not to compromise the peace of mind and safety of her generous and devoted young friend!

"*December* 31, 1836.

"Through these three days of anguish I have been thinking of you, my dear child, and saying to myself—

"She will have shared my feelings. Has she been able to hide them? Will she have shown too great an interest and let the world see her anxiety?"

All this formal precaution does not prevent her from expressing herself very freely on the subject of some whom she denounces without naming. Under this veil she seems to feel more at liberty to say what she feels about the uncles of Louis Napoleon, for example, and even about her own husband, the dethroned King of Holland:—

"Could you have believed that fear would have led his uncles to act so meanly? The marriage[1] is broken off too. And for fools like these we were almost stupid enough to sacrifice ourselves! This is all our reward; for in reality they would have profited by the success of the man whom they blame to-day."

From time to time the queenly correspondent makes some sad reflections upon the world's ingratitude and upon her own illusions, so cruelly destroyed by experience:—

"I want to flee as far as possible from this world, which has brought me nothing but pain, and in which the only happy moments I have known have come through him; for I was weak enough to love even my enemies, and well they have punished me.

"Only there, where I shall find peace and the absence of calumny, can I ever call myself happy."

[1] The prospective union of Princess Mathilde with her cousin, Prince Louis Napoleon. See Queen Hortense's letters on the subject in the sketch of Mathilde Napoleon.

But the principal topic of her letters is always the burning question of the Napoleon family; there was never any very cordial friendship between the Beauharnais and the Bonapartes. Quarrels about money, difficulties in family arrangements, arrears of payment—these things form the subject of her complaints, and the whole responsibility is thrown, as of right, on her unfortunate husband, the King of Holland:—

"*February* 4, 1837.

"As yet I only know of his arrival (Louis Napoleon's) by the newspapers, and I fear lest it may be a false report. His father makes no sign, but really to do no harm is almost to do good. As they did not want me to know beforehand, the necessary money was obtained from the banker—a sum to which they were actually entitled, since it was the proceeds of an estate which had been sold. His father's first exclamation was that he would never discharge that debt, so you may guess who has really had to pay it. Ah, children who have no relatives are sometimes to be envied! I shall become a Saint-Simonien!"

Irresistibly moved to pour out her soul, she concealed none of her worries: personal cares, family divisions, jealousies, intestine rivalries amongst the Bonapartes; deep anxiety as to the fate in store for her son who has undertaken to be the sole upholder of the Napoleonic tradition; and involuntary yearning for another son who is never named between them, because she had renounced him from his birth, but who still occupies a place in her heart. At first he was styled simply Demorny, and then, thanks to the separation of the syllables and the addition of the particle, *De* Morny, pending the day when wealth and power having been attained, the titles count and duke shall be added. Of this son she never speaks openly; but he is constantly in her mind, and there are many allusions in these pages which are transparent to all eyes.

There is a terrible document containing this secret, the possible divulgation of which keeps her in a perpetual state of fear. The document also involves another person, the *sister*, the unknown sister always spoken of in covert terms, but who is no relation of the Countess Le Hon, who is not even a woman, but a friend of the ambassadress—Morny himself.

"I was sure the paper had not been divulged; but it was none the less discovered in a portfolio. I only parted with it in the event of danger cropping up here, and I had a guarantee and promise that it should only be used in such a crisis. I was certain that, as they are loyal, I should not be betrayed. I know, moreover, that all my letters to your sister were searched through. Were they ever returned? It seems as though they must have seen the truth. . . . If one had been at all near to success, *one* would not have had to regret it."

On this subject her mind knows no repose. She needs constant reassurance.

"I wrote to you two days ago. You will have my opinion for your *sister*. I want her to be happy, and if in the past her pride has often been wounded, let her rise above the opinion of the world and compel respect in that way. I know well that to accomplish this a fortune is necessary, because it confers independence:[1] this is what we must aim at. . . . I may tell you, my dear niece, that a letter received here announces that the father of *your cousin* (Louis Napoleon) is desirous of having my affairs settled to my satisfaction; but I dare not believe it."

And again:—

"I do not wish your sister to interrupt her career. . . .

[1] This sentence alone would be sufficient to clear up the mystery of the situation. How could it be a Mosselman under discussion, since Madame Le Hon's family was one of the wealthiest in Belgium?

Let her take care of herself, that is all. . . . All I want is to know her to be as happy as it is possible for her to be. . . ."

Then in a postscript :—

"*This letter is for both of you.*"

To write about it is hardly sufficient. The feelings she is compelled to reduce to the limits of an indirect correspondence will have free vent when they meet.

"*December* 6, 1836.

"I expect to go to England in the spring, and will write to you from thence. There only shall I be able to see your sister Augustine,[1] and say good-bye to her."

It has been stated that Louis Napoleon and Morny met for the first time after the proclamation of the Republic, when the future Emperor came to Paris to stand as a candidate for the elections. As a matter of fact, ever since Strasburg and Boulogne, Morny, the man destined to be the ruling spirit of the Second Empire, never lost sight of his brother Napoleon. He was with him in Scotland. And, perhaps without mutual arrangement, but not ignoring the fact, the two were very near meeting in their mother's house, in the last year of Queen Hortense's life.

Those portions of the correspondence which concern Morny do not stop at the details we have just read. Many other very delicate points of legitimization are touched upon, points upon which we prefer not to dwell, but which become surprisingly clear when taken in conjunction with the ambiguous terms of an otherwise precise declaration, found amongst the papers of the ex-minister of State.[2] Emile Ollivier declares that Morny never

[1] Morny's Christian name was *Auguste.*

[2] In this document he wrote with his own hand the following unmistakable words : "I am the last son of the Queen during her marriage with King Louis of Holland, consequently, by law, I am Prince Bonaparte, the brother of the reigning Emperor, and victim of a crime : that is, of suppression by the

intended to claim his rank in the Imperial Family by unveiling the mystery. He did not use his power; but the idea did occur to him, and certain allusions which we could not fail to notice in one of Queen Hortense's letters to Countess Le Hon indicate sufficiently plainly that she herself secretly and prudently encouraged him to do so.

Thus we see the interest attached to the letters which we have just revealed; they throw unexpected light on certain aspects hitherto left unexplained in the lives of these historic personages.

As long as Louis Napoleon remained silently at Arenenberg, or shut up in the prison of Ham, Morny allowed none to suspect that he might some day bring about the restoration of the Empire. He was on the best of terms with the Orléans princes, and the influence of Countess Le Hon was, so to speak, a link. For he was always an adept, both in his pleasures and in his ambitions, at winning over

State. To establish my rights—were I the man to take that step—I have more proofs than I need: common knowledge, family likeness, my mother's letters; finally, a letter from my brother in which he acknowledges the fact. Although in principle I am not inclined to put forward my claims, this is no reason . . ." At these words he breaks off abruptly.

Here is another important document, copied faithfully from the original (Registres de l'état civil de Paris, 3e arrondissement): birth certificate of the future great personage in the State, the Duke de Morny:—

"The year eighteen hundred and eleven, October the twenty-second, at noon, before us, Mayor of the III arrondissement of Paris, the undersigned, acting as officer of the civil state:

"Claude Martin Gardien, doctor of medicine and accoucheur, living in Paris, 137 Rue Montmartre, in the Mail ward, has declared to us that yesterday at two o'clock in the morning there was born in his house a child of the male sex whom he presents to us, and to whom he gives the names of Charles Auguste Louis Joseph, which child is born of Louise Emilie Coralie Fleury, wife of Auguste Jean Hyacinthe Demorny, landowner at St. Domingue, dwelling at Villemaneuse, in the department of the Seine. The said presentations and declarations being made in the presence of Alexis Charlemagne Lamy, shoemaker, aged 42 years, dwelling in Paris, 25 Rue Buffaut, and of Joseph Manch, tailor, aged 40 years, dwelling in Paris, 3 Rue des Deux Ecus, a friend.

"His attestation, and the witnesses have signed with us after reading the same. "(Signed) GARDIEN, LAMY, MANCH.

"CRETTÉ, *Deputy Mayor.*"

THE DUCHESS DE MORNY

women to his side. Although bound heart and soul to the family of Orléans, which she loved both in exile and on the throne, Countess Le Hon, impelled by a still more powerful inclination, observed with complacency the views and designs of Morny, encouraging their fulfilment and helping him by the resources which fortune brings. Or perhaps her sympathies led her almost unconsciously to intervene in his affairs with the sole intention of being useful. Just as under the July Monarchy she had attempted to soften the rigours of the Government towards the Bonapartist pretender, so under the Presidency, and in the early years of the Empire, she sought to use her influence to suspend reactionary measures against the dispossessed princes.

Close to the sumptuous mansion of Madame Le Hon, in the Champs Elysées,[1] stood a less pretentious but equally celebrated house, called, from its modest proportions in comparison to her palace, and also with a meaning easily understood, *La Niche à Fidèle.* It was here Morny lived. There is nothing more to tell about the *coup d'état*, such as he had planned it, in concert with Saint Arnaud, Maupas, and Fleury. It is a fact not generally known that the project originated in Countess Le Hon's salon, when Morny was still only a semi-political personage, uncertain as yet what road to follow, one foot resting upon Orléanism, the other upon Bonapartism. It was here he felt his ambition and his appetites increase. It was here that his brain first harboured those audacious hopes.

Who could have suspected what was taking place in this Orléanist circle? The eyes of the most sagacious politicians were covered by a thick bandage. The dictatorship! Who ever dreamed of such a thing? If, perchance, some importunate omen cast its dark shadow in advance, there

[1] It became the property of Madame Sabatier d'Espeyran. In 1906 the neighbouring pavilion was occupied by the deputy Archdeacon.

was first an outcry, and then a general laugh at the impotent menace.

"It was in that very circle," said General Estancelin to me, half a century later, "that, having brought the conversation to this point and showed my fear of a terrible awakening on the morrow, Madame Dosne, the mother-in-law of Thiers, replied: 'Monsieur Estancelin, you must not say such things. Nobody wants a dictatorship, *not even that of my son-in-law!*'"

On one of those evenings which preceded the famous day, Morny stayed till two o'clock in the morning in the little salon on the first floor, thinking ironically of the moment when those would be flung from the windows who had but now entered by the wide-open double doors.

Queen Hortense, Morny, Fleury, Persigny—such names, such influences, such friendships, could not fail to effect a marked development in the political opinions of Countess Le Hon. Her salon took on a tint of imperialism; in other words, it reflected a personal preference. No fundamental change was outwardly noticeable so long as it continued to occupy a place in the highest social circles. She continued to receive political friends from another camp. Old affections rooted in the Countess's heart were never supplanted by any alternations of success. Thoughout the eighteen years of the Bonapartist Restoration, and even long after the downfall of the regime, she made it a duty to maintain loyal relations with the Royal Family whose King had been so closely connected with her own triumphant debut in the great world of Paris.

Nevertheless successive vicissitudes of time and government had made great breaches in her fortune. It was never wholly reconstituted after the sensational auditing of accounts to which we have already referred. The rich veins of the mines of Vieille-Montagne had ceased to yield. Their splendid dividends had flowed like water between the fingers of the beautiful Countess.

Acting in concert with Count Le Hon—who was never separated from her, notwithstanding the rumours based on the diplomatist's more or less prolonged absences in Brussels—she sold the palace which had been the scene of her social sovereignty.[1] She now adopted the practice of spending three-quarters of the year in her Château de Condé.[2] Now and then she would return to Paris and once more take possession of the city whose attractions—vain though they be called—can always recapture those who have once tasted them. At the bottom of her heart lurked some bitter remembrance of past days. Her letters often express regret; she often shows herself sad and forsaken; and although she flattered herself that she had brought her heart to reason, she cannot help uttering a complaint. It was, no doubt, some such letter from her that provoked the following charming reply from Madame Janvier de la Motte (Adèle Perrot). This letter is too sincere, too truly feminine, to be left in the obscurity in which we discovered it:—

"When I think you bless God for your indifference! Do not curse love, but lovers! I sometimes imagine myself young, and alone as I am in this ugly cottage. Do you suppose I should find it tedious, if I had but the hope of seeing the arrival of the Beloved? How little I should care for the ugliness around me! I should have one dear face to gladden my eyes. Therein would lie all the charm! It is better to have loved, even when all is over, than never to have known the only happiness attainable in this world. It is isolation alone that makes old age. I resign myself to it, but without abjuring the god I have adored!

"ADÈLE PERROT (Madame Janvier de la Motte)."

[1] When Count Le Hon died, expressions of sympathy came to her from all quarters. One of the Belgian ministers, Van Praet, wrote to her on May 3, 1868: "Often, looking back on the times we have known, the King would say: 'My father always impressed upon me that Count Le Hon had rendered him the greatest services in the most difficult moment of his reign.'" And he added: "You are indeed right to say, 'Those were the good old times.'"

[2] Now the property of Count de Zarnac.

Between two removals she saw once more the old familiar faces. She tasted once again the homage formerly lavished on her. Some friends promised to come and see the setting sun on her estate.

"Oh, I know those promises," she replied; "they are no better than visiting cards; people never come. But I am very happy in my solitude; it is, in fact, only there that I have learnt to know the face of a woman I love, and whom I have never really known."

"Yes," said her interlocutor, a clever man and a poet, "and that charming woman is yourself."

"I never had time before, I will not say to look at my face, but to look into my own soul."

The days of her great receptions in the gorgeous setting of the Champs Elysées were indeed over. Shortly after the marriage of her daughter, who became Princess Poniatowska, whose charms of mind and person won her a brilliant place at the Imperial Court, Countess Le Hon ceased to go into society.

The dusk was gathering round her. She had been compelled to sell her country house also, where she had made a second life of peace and privacy, and return to Paris to devote herself to those she loved. In 1879 she lost her beloved son, Count Léopold Le Hon. This proved her own death-blow. The following year her troubles ended with her life. Many of those who had been separated by political differences, or the mere fluctuations of human destiny, met again by her grave. She was enshrouded in violets, just in that season of mists when the first gleams of light seem to give promise of nature's reawakening. And, indeed, the sun, piercing the clouds, threw one consoling ray of light upon the bier which, as one eye-witness says, enclosed "such abundance of vanished light."

. . . . . .

We have been reminded by some very definite revelations—proceeding to some extent from the maternal

bosom—of the birth of the Duke de Morny, who had good reason to adopt in his coat of arms the flower of the hortensia *barred.*

One other fact, and one of terrible significance too, concerning the equally doubtful origin of his crowned brother, Louis Napoleon. This, I received from Alfred Mézières, to whom the story was told by the Duchesse de Plaisance, in a villa at Athens, when, just fresh from the *Ecole Normale*, he was making the classic tour of those privileged places.

She was the daughter-in-law of the former Second Consul, who entertained a strong regard for her lively intelligence, a quality somewhat wasted upon her husband, General Lebrun, a rough, abrupt soldier, and nothing but a soldier. The Consul said to her shrewdly, "You and I meet by the medium of Charles!" In one of their many chats he confided to her the following souvenir of a journey in Holland.

One afternoon Lebrun, the Duc de Plaisance and the Duchess went together to the palace of King Louis Bonaparte. When they reached the castle, they saw beneath the porch a young woman holding to her breast a baby clothed in elegant laces. It was Prince Louis in the arms of his nurse. The visitors went up to the child, bestowed a caress on it, and then ascended the stairs. On the first floor they separated; the duke went to the King, the duchess to pay her respects to the Queen.

Lebrun's first words on being admitted to the royal presence were to congratulate the King on the beautiful babe he had just seen and to flatter the vanity of the parent.

"What are you talking of?" answered Louis in a sharp voice. "It is not my child. He is nothing to me. I know perfectly well that not a drop of Bonaparte blood runs in his veins; but as he is the third, as he has no chance of succeeding to my throne, and will never reign

anywhere, I do not choose to make a scandal or fuss. Be sure, however, that he is no son of mine."

What a strange imbroglio in the origins of the imperialist restoration! Louis Napoleon arriving at the zenith of human power by virtue of a more than doubtful parentage; Morny, his unacknowledged brother, helping him to climb the steps of the throne, and following closely behind him, whilst into the orbit of their astonishing fortune another equally strange destiny will soon be drawn, that of Count Walewski, the actual son of the great Emperor, by the law of nature.

CHAPTER V

PLEASURE'S AMBASSADRESS

PAULINE DE METTERNICH SANDOR

Two sides of one portrait—The young Countess Pauline Sandor—Her marriage with Prince Richard Metternich—Arrival in Paris—Receptions at the Austrian Embassy—Princesse de Metternich, in spite of Wagner, leads the fashion at Court and in town—Anecdotes—A great lady's passion for the theatre—At Compiègne—Fragments of original letters—Madame de Metternich's friends and enemies—Flight of epigrams—A hotter attack—Excitement in the camp of the princesses—An exciting duel—Madame de Metternich's true rôle at the Court of Napoleon—The last act of a brilliant comedy—On a new stage—Princesse de Metternich's pre-eminence in Viennese society.

WHOLLY Viennese at heart and fervently patriotic as she showed herself, it was not without good reason that the name of "the Parisian Princess" was bestowed on the former ambassadress, the quick-witted woman who, during the ten or twelve years during which she was constantly in evidence, succeeded by her keen vivacity in amusing, interesting, and charming her friends in France, while she irritated the jealous, shocked the timid, astounded some, annoyed others, and filled the entire Press with the echo of her name and the brilliance of her entertainments. Nor in the long interval that has elapsed since those days, has she ever ceased to play a leading part, to revolve between these two capitals—the successive stages on which her original destiny has been played out.

Not many years ago—the autograph letter lies before us—she dashed off, in her large characteristic writing, the

following lines, addressed to one of our great men, as famous in society as in literature :—

"You know how fleeting is the royalty of fashion, and I assure you that which you attribute to me now survives only, I think, in the form of a myth, a vague memory."

I think, she says. How cleverly her reticence is qualified! What a happy corrective to the expression of her philosophical disillusionment! In reality, not one of those feminine personalities who dazzled the Court of Napoleon III was privileged like Madame de Metternich to prolong her fleeting sovereignty beyond the circumstances which gave it birth. Unlike the falling stars which gleamed around her, she never experienced a painful and sudden eclipse, or dispersion into the void. She simply continued to move and shine with the same splendour, although beneath other skies.

Springing from an eccentric father, Count Sandor, a Hungarian magnate, famous for his mad daring as a horseman, she had preserved in her veins and in her temper a grain of his turbulent ardour. "The paternal blood," she used to say, "speaks very loud in me."

She was by nature gay. As a child the little Countess was considered very wild; as a young girl her independent ways and unconventional mind enlivened the chilly, official atmosphere of the Imperial Court of Austria. In the aristocratic and haughty clan grouped around the Archduchesses she was beginning to be a good deal discussed, and even imitated, when she was married to Prince Richard Metternich, son of the illustrious diplomatist who had presided at the Congress of Vienna, and started almost immediately for Paris, whither on the strength of his name he had been sent as ambassador. She was twenty-two years of age. He was not more than thirty.

This was in 1860. Diplomatic circles had recovered from the feeling produced by the brief campaign which—

not without some uncertainty of fortune—had driven back the Austrian power beyond the quadrilateral. At home successive demonstrations of strength, wealth, and confidence cast a glamour over the presumption and carelessness of the French Government in matters of foreign policy. The ambassadress arrived at an opportune moment.

Her coming was preceded by the indiscretions of the Press. Preliminary information had been obtained about her originality, her daring ways, her outspokenness, and the spontaneity of her repartee, which had made her the spoilt child of the Viennese Court. Questions and speculations were rife. What would she be like? What dress would she wear on her first appearance at the Opera, or at the Salle Ventadour, in the front of her box? After all, perhaps she would prove like all Austrian princesses—tall, cold, very reserved, her lips curved in a disdainful smile. Some pictured her with a nose of a particular shape and hair of such and such a colour, appearing at the theatre in a gorgeous dress of crimson velvet whose heavy magnificence would be relieved by Venetian lace and Spanish embroideries. They were soon to know. One night at the Opera in the Rue Lepeletier a rumour ran round the house that she had just entered her box. The occupants of the first two tiers immediately withdrew their attention from the stage. The news was whispered from box to box. Every opera-glass was directed towards the stage-box in which she had comfortably and quietly installed herself. Slim, of middle height, pleasant to look at, yet somewhat baffling as to expression, the first impression was one of surprise. The second was entirely sympathetic. It did not take long to discover that she might be a real princess, yet blend unaffectedness with a commanding air of distinction.

The next morning Paris proclaimed by the flattering pen of Jules Noriac that the new ambassadress was charm,

grace, and cleverness personified. She had deliberately acquired her place in society.

From the moment of her arrival she grasped the tone of the society in which she was called to live, in a centre of youth, ease, and luxury, and felt herself at home. She allowed herself free rein. We must take our pleasure where we find it; therefore she began by adapting herself to the spirit of the place, until it came to follow her lead and finally to acknowledge her social supremacy. The world was carried madly along in her train; the elegance of her toilettes, her special characteristics, her jokes and repartees and constant flow of wit—nothing she did or said passed unnoticed. On the Boulevards her carriage with eight springs, drawn by four magnificent horses, and bearing on the panels her coat-of-arms surmounted by a princely coronet, was as well known as the imperial equipage. Her name appeared daily in the reports of society journalists.

The style and bewildering variety of her dresses, her free and easy manner and the startling novelties to which she lent her name, a thousand little vagaries emanating from the excitability and turbulence of her youth, supplied an unfailing topic of conversation.

It was notorious that she intended to reform the fashions. Her renovating influence in the sphere of smart clothes was prompt and sensible; she declared war against the thrice-closed cage and fought for short skirts. Such dresses took the ballrooms by storm and pleased the taste of many. "On this occasion," remarks Mérimée slyly, "I saw many charming feet, and even garters, during the valse." The times were propitious. It was the eve of a revolution in the sphere of tailors and milliners. The men milliners were getting the upper hand of the great women dressmakers. An Englishman named Worth—the far-famed Worth—had established himself in Paris in 1858. Madame de Metternich soon discovered this un-

PRINCESS PAULINE DE METTERNICH-SANDOR

equalled fitter, who felt, interpreted, and corrected nature with the genius and imagination of an artist. At the risk of offending Aurélien Scholl, who bestowed on him in envy the nickname of "the faun of the toilette," because his masculine hands were permitted to handle at will the bodices and fascinating figures of the feminine sex, she adopted him herself and forced him on her friends. Thanks to her,[1] he became the autocrat of taste, and all the fashionable women who wished to be in the first flight of elegance flocked to his establishment in the Rue de la Paix.

Madame de Metternich had other more distinctive claims to merit than that of having reformed feminine taste. Her wit was not disputed; it flashed from every word she spoke. Her physique lent itself still more to controversy. "We have now not only Leyden jars," said some mocking spirits; "we have also Madame de Metternich."[2] Quick and clever in self-criticism, in order to forestall the criticism of others, she always declared herself to be entirely without beauty, hoping that in consideration of the expressiveness of her face her hearers would not take her at her word. One evening at Princess Mathilde's she accosted a celebrated dramatist: "Are you Monsieur Sardou?" "Yes, Princess." "Tell me, then, is it true I am so much like Mademoiselle Desportes?" This lady was an actress at the Gymnase, who had a reputation for being both witty and ugly. "One can always find a likeness between two women," replied Sardou, "however different they may be in reality. But I only judge by externals, and there I see a striking resemblance between you, Princess, and this actress; you

[1] Matters did not always run quite so smoothly between the Princess and her dressmaker. When the war broke out Worth was engaged in a lawsuit with Madame de Metternich for a bill of 75,000 francs. She considered it excessive, but he declined to reduce it.

[2] Hippolyte Briollet, in the *Charivari*, invented this cabalistic definition.

both have youth and cleverness."[1] Women saw more; they remarked that the oval of her face was not regularity itself, that her lips were thick, and that exception might be taken to the "abrupt curve" of her nose. On the other hand, there was but one verdict as to the brilliance of her black and sparkling eyes and the pleasing impression of her extremely mobile face; nor could any one dispute that there was something charming in her fair hair. In fact, by virtue of sheer goodwill, some even went so far as to declare that on the whole the ambassadress might pass for a good-looking "blonde." This opinion must have been shared by Winterhalter, the official painter of the graces of the "Imperial Decameron," since he succeeded in giving charm to her likeness.

"When the Princesse de Metternich," says a contemporary, "appeared at the Tuileries at a court ball, very

[1] Since we have brought together the names of Madame de Metternich and Victorien Sardou, let us relate one other anecdote, which, like the last, I had from the mouth of the illustrious Academician himself. Sardou was dining with the Countess de Pourtalès. Madame de Metternich was taking the chief part in the conversation, while the most brilliant of talkers rested and listened to her. She had brought the subject round to her father-in-law, the great Metternich, and told this little story. Metternich was once asked under what circumstances Napoleon I—whom he had often met and conferred with—had given him the most striking impression of prestige and complete sovereignty. He was expected to reply: at Dresden, or at Erfurt, when he sent to Paris for his "Comédie" to entertain a suite of kings and princes. It was not there. It was, he said, one morning at Compiègne, when they returned from a drive in the forest, where they had spent more time than they intended. They returned to the castle about noon. The Emperor, leaning his back against the chimney, according to his habit, chatted with his guests whilst awaiting the summons to lunch. There were a number of personages and members of the Imperial Family present. Presently he began to feel the pangs of hunger. Breaking off the conversation, he turned to Murat: "King of Naples, go and see why we do not lunch." The brilliant Murat left the room to inquire. Then he returned: "Sire, the meal will be ready in a few minutes. There has been a slight mishap." Napoleon resumed his argument. But the delay was still prolonged. He grew impatient. Turning to the other side, he said, "King of Holland, try to find out whether we are to lunch to-day!" Prince Metternich, accustomed to the strict and stately Austrian etiquette, was greatly struck to see an emperor sending kings to the pantry to hasten the service of a meal.

slight, even thin, rather tall, her bare shoulders rising from her extremely low dress, her brow laden with diamonds, her long skirts sweeping the floor, no woman had more distinctly the 'grand air.' She had that inimitable aristocratic bearing which is only conferred by birth and environment."

All the choicest Parisian society flocked in those days to the Rue de Varennes. In settling there the Prince and Princess Metternich had only to resume the old-established customs of the Austrian Embassy, where ease and hospitable gaiety had always reigned. The fame of the delightful evening parties, and especially of the afternoon dances which Count Apponyi had given there during the Restoration, had never been forgotten in the aristocratic faubourg.

Conversation was once more in high favour there, and music also, for Richard Metternich, the diplomatic prince of valse, was himself something of a virtuoso. The *Lieder* of the greatest masters of German melody, Strauss's valses, or the airs from grand opera, all blended there in a harmonious eclecticism. It was here that the daring project was conceived of forcing Wagner upon Paris. The Princess was considerably in advance of her generation when she beguiled the Emperor into commanding a performance of *Tannhäuser* at the Opera House—a memorable first night, accompanied by all the tumult of battle; a heroic fiasco, in which Madame de Metternich displayed such valour in marshalling her troops, and so much militant energy, that her opponents in music (and I leave my readers to imagine whether they were numerous on that occasion!) were heard to murmur beneath her box: "The Austrians are evidently trying to take their revenge for Solferino."

What an evening! What a venture! What a daring attempt, twenty years before the psychological moment!

Urged by her, the Emperor decided that the nebulous

Tannhäuser should be given at the Opera, and the first night took place in the year of grace 1861. In the ardour of her far-sighted zeal Madame de Metternich had grouped around her all her friends. No, I am wrong. Wiser than that, she had distributed them about the house. Amongst the women were the Countesses de Pourtalès, Walewska, Le Hon; the Princesses de Sagan, Poniatowska, de Beauvau; and Madame Erazzu, the beautiful Mexican. Amongst the men were to be seen the Rothschilds, the Aguados, the brothers Lamberty, the Marquis de Massa, d'Alton-Shée, Galliffet, Grammont-Caderousse, and many more! Looking down upon all these from their box, the Emperor and Empress conscientiously endeavoured to form an opinion of their own and to appear interested in this music of which they did not understand a single bar. But all eyes turned to Madame de Metternich, who had obviously undertaken to lead the applause. The score was spread open on the ledge of her box, while her fan was raised in her hand like a conductor's baton. Unluckily, some one laughed in the house at the beginning of the piece, and laughed loud. The house never became serious again. The savages, the "Caribees" were let loose. Indignation was written plainly on the countenance of the Princess; but her furious gestures and the one word she could not keep back, but which went hissing through the house—"idiots"—were of no avail. The march was applauded, because it was impossible not to be carried away in spite of oneself by that marvellous page of music. The rest was a mere rout—an indescribable noise and riot. From boxes to orchestra, from orchestra to amphitheatre, remarks were exchanged and whizzed like a flight of arrows. Then the chatter and gossip! Some insinuated that this performance of *Tannhäuser* was a secret clause in the Treaty of Villafranca; others said that Wagner had been sent to the Parisians in order to compel them to admire Berlioz.

The following day the entire Press condemned the work. The march alone was spared, as the critics wished to preserve an impartial air. In her anger the Princess decided that henceforth nothing but Wagner should be played at her house—a passing fit of temper, which did not prevent her eclecticism from also enjoying in their turn the lighter muses of Offenbach and Hervé and the melodies of Gounod.

She was not allowed time to weep over this catastrophe. One of her most assiduous friends—a clever and witty man, Beyens—proposed to write a parody on the opera which had failed, in the form of shadow pictures, to be given at her house. The Count de Solms, who had a good deal of talent as a draughtsman, cut out in cardboard the figures of the principal characters in this phantasmagoria. It was an amusing spectacle. Just before the curtain went up a lady friend of the house, in the dress and cap of a theatrical attendant, was inspired with the happy idea of presenting all the ladies present with a cheap fan, for the use of those who might hesitate from reasons of economy to smash their own.[1] There was the hunting scene, in which the slender greyhounds were represented by wry-legged bassets, and the antlered stag by a timid rabbit. There was the transfiguration of the Wartburg, changed into the *Johannisberg* (the celebrated castle and vineyard belonging to Prince Metternich). And the heroic Tannhäuser, shut up in the cellar, reeled about and drank a bottle of the wine, while a voice in the wings sang to the air of "Le Bouton de Rose":—

"Dieu, quelle veste
Pour Wagner et son Vénusberg!
Noyons du moins leur sort funeste
A grands flots de Johannisberg
Sur cette veste!"

[1] It was said that at the Opéra Madame de Metternich at the first hiss broke her fan between her clenched fingers.

Amid the hearty laughter called forth by this scene the last vestiges of the Princess's anger vanished. It was long before *Tannhäuser* was ever heard of again.

Every one connected with the Embassy, and those outside who had the good fortune to be admitted there, knew that Madame de Metternich excelled in the art of varying her pleasures. Admission to her *redoutes* was universally coveted. Men were admitted with their faces uncovered; the women wore a domino, but the hood had to be raised at the door of the first salon, in which the mistress of the house stood to receive her guests; for the doors of her house were never opened except to those personally invited. She received numerous requests, welcomed some and declined others, and on the whole showed considerable exclusiveness, incurring thereby some cruel enmities. Once received, however, her guests felt quite at home. The great charm of her parties lay in the fact that the pleasure of the entertainments alternated with intervals of sparkling conversation. She herself spared no pains. Her sallies—sometimes daring, sometimes subtle, according to circumstances or the tone of the conversation—were taken up and repeated by the company. Wholly impulsive, she, like other people, had her moments of temper, provoked by some awkwardness, some contradiction, impertinence, or ill-chosen expression. If her remarks stung, so much the worse for the offender; she was not a woman to weigh her words. Impatient and sharp-tongued as she was, gentleness and suavity sometimes suffered in consequence. Her repartees were somewhat brusque and sudden.

One evening, at a great reception, a stranger, an American journalist, who himself related the incident to me forty years later, smiling at the recollection, stepped inadvertently on the edge of her long court train. She turned her head and observed in a dry tone—

"Peasant!"

A week later, at another official party, the company

crowded to the buffet, where glasses of sparkling wine were being passed round. Some one knocked her elbow slightly, and a few drops fell from the glass on her silk dress. Again the little swift gesture; she had recognized the guilty party.

"Ah," she said, "my peasant again!"

On another occasion at a fancy-dress ball, her friend Galliffet having tormented and worried her a little too much, she took a sharp revenge. The officer, who had been wounded by the bursting of a shell, was now on sick leave and making the most of it. He was at this moment wandering through the rooms dressed as an apothecary of Louis XIV's time, and hanging from his belt he bore with martial pride the instrument bequeathed by Molière to Marshal Lobau.

"Do you know what it is, beautiful mask?" he asked the Princess.

"Yes!" she replied quickly; "it is the cannon which wounded poor Galliffet in the Crimea!"

Some of her jests were less harsh, however. One might go on quoting them for ever.

The frivolities of dress, the programmes of her fêtes, and the pleasures of conversation did not engross the whole of her time and attention. Madame de Metternich was a born diplomatist. She exercised a good deal of official influence, although not always in the right direction, as for instance in the Mexican affair, for she had not been the least zealous in striving to realize the American dream.[1] On other occasions her influence might have proved salutary had her advice been followed, as for instance in 1866, when it was still possible to check the encroachments of Prussia. A double war might not then have broken out four years later; there would have been no Sadowa, and Sadowa would not have entailed Sedan.

[1] She also shared the views of the Empress on the Roman question. It is well known that Eugénie was always an active Papist.

Generally speaking, it may be said that a good share of the enlightened shrewdness shown by the Austrian Embassy emanated from the Princesse de Metternich. By her intelligent collaboration she completed her husband's rôle, who always held her in the highest esteem. The Prince upheld his position by means of showy external appearances. In manners and mind he was an accomplished ambassador. In the dazzling round of fashionable amusements he lost sight of the more needful side of a diplomatist's duties—the observation and study of men. The intricate policy of Napoleon III presented many byways and shadows which his hurried glance never penetrated; either because they escaped his notice, or because he trusted to the finer perceptions of the ambassadress to see through them. Not that she appeared much concerned with such matters; she seemed fully occupied—beneath the somewhat fast and heedless airs which deceived so many people—in playing her own part of a fashionable woman in close attendance upon the Empress. Her attention, which was always on the alert, could hardly have adopted a more ingenious mask than this feigned indifference to politics. She belonged to those who think and reflect; but to all appearances she had decided that the most urgent thing in life was amusement; the rest would come in due course.

No salon in Paris was more open to freedom of speech than that of the Princesse de Metternich. She conversed with a little air of detachment, with indulgent kindliness and an encouraging smile, giving a spur to the talk if it showed signs of languishing. Every one had an opportunity of taking part in it. She listened and remembered, always light-hearted, passing rapidly from one topic to another, and carefully banishing from her face the watchful expression which rouses the suspicions of inveterate chatterers. Was she not the authoress of the oft-quoted and sensible saying:

PRINCE RICHARD DE METTERNICH, THE AUSTRIAN AMBASSADOR, WITH HIS WIFE, PRINCESS PAULINE DE METTERNICH-SANDOR.

"He looks too astute for an ambassador!"

From her arrival, she won the sympathy of the Imperial couple. Eugénie enjoyed her fascinating vivacity and chatted familiarly with her whenever official circumstances brought them together. The degree of their intimacy, however, has been much exaggerated. Madame de Metternich was never the inseparable friend of the Empress, as is so often stated. This idea has been corrected in the *Souvenirs de la Cour des Tuileries* by Madame Carette—reader and subsequently lady-in-waiting, therefore in constant personal attendance upon Eugénie—to whom Madame de Metternich confided in a moment of expansion that had the Empress been Marie Antoinette she would gladly have been her Princess de Lamballe.

In a conversation I once had the honour of holding with this lady she explained to me with still greater precision the exact relationship which existed between them.

In reality, apart from the usual court ceremonial, the Empress had only one friend, the Duchesse de Mouchy; and except at her Monday receptions, and on purely social occasions, she received no one without a formal request for an audience.

But in spring and autumn, when the Court moved from Paris to the various country residences at Fontainebleau or Compiègne, where distinctions were somewhat relaxed and royalty was brought daily into closer touch with their guests at table, in the ballroom, the theatre, or during outdoor excursions, the bonds of union were apt to be strengthened. Then, indeed, Madame de Metternich's company became precious and indispensable to the Empress. She required people who could impart gaiety and life to the scene. Madame de Metternich possessed this gift of infectious enthusiasm to a singular degree.

These were days of peace and prosperity. Every illusion was permissible. The Princess preferred theatricals

to any other form of agreeable pastime. She expended upon this amusement all her natural impulsiveness and the initiative faculty which found few other outlets.

At the Court of the Tuileries sumptuary laws had been revived; the rules of precedence and all observances of etiquette were enforced—the more rigorously, perhaps, that they were of such mushroom growth.

Consequently dinners and receptions opened with icy stiffness. Gradually the tension relaxed. Youth and temperament got the upper hand; the company laughed, grew lively, became themselves, and many a function, commenced beneath the mask of ceremonious reserve, would end in a sort of Spanish *tertulia*, in which, regardless of etiquette, every one said whatever came into his mind.

Madame de Metternich, with the ease of her cheerful temperament, hastened the moment when intercourse became free and speech untrammelled. Conversation then became more intimate; eyes brightened and flashed; every one breathed more freely and began to live. The former Austrian ambassador, Baron de Hübner, had already testified that the Tuileries were by no means dull, and that gala nights there had a considerable attraction in the eyes of an amused diplomatist.

But it was at Compiègne, where, as we have said, Madame de Metternich passed several weeks each year, that the search for fresh amusements became keener and that the Princess's gift of bringing life and animation in her train was the most appreciated. In the Empress's sadder moments, when the Emperor whom she loved exclusively neglected her and she felt a kind of irritable grief, the Princesse de Metternich's company became almost a necessity to her, because she needed distraction at any price. "La dame du logis," as Mérimée wrote in his *Inconnue*, adopted every means to dispel her secret sadness. And theatricals, music, country expeditions in

quick succession, were inaugurated by her who was called at the French Court "the ambassadress of pleasure."

It was in the course of these sports and entertainments that on the Empress's birthday, November 15, the never-to-be-forgotten dance called the "Diable à quatre," was given in the private theatre of the Court—a great lady's caprice which has been so often described that it has become almost historical.

The idea was to get up a costume-ballet as at the Opéra, with tights and short skirts, and the "Diable à quatre" had been selected. Every day a dancing master from the Opéra came to Compiègne in the strictest secrecy—for the ballet was intended to be a surprise—to supervise the rehearsals of the four dancers and their partner, the Marquis de Caux. When the great day arrived, the ballet was given before the whole of the Court, and a number of strangers invited for the occasion. The dancing and action were brilliantly performed. Confused and pleased, the artists, amongst whom was an ambassadress, namely, the Princesse de Metternich, appeared before the Emperor and his guests to receive their compliments. The story runs that as the evening was to end with a ball, the dancers of the "Diable à quatre" were entreated to retain their tights instead of resuming their long court trains, and that the gaiety of the party was greatly increased in consequence.

Matters did not always run quite smoothly when private theatricals and entertainments were being arranged with the Princess as autocratic stage manager.

It is said that a curious quarrel arose between Madame de Metternich and the Duchess de Persigny over a trivial detail in the mounting of a play. One of Watteau's pictures, "Le Déjeuner Champêtre," had been selected for a *tableau vivant* at Compiègne. The Princess was arranging the costumes and parts. Every one seemed pleased

except Madame de Persigny, wife of the Minister of the Interior, who was disappointed at not being allowed to dress her part as she wished; for instance, having fair hair of rare beauty, she was anxious to display it.

"I want my hair to be seen," she kept repeating with a little lisp and an almost childish obstinacy.

"But it is not possible," replied Madame de Metternich. "On the contrary, you must wear your hair rather high and powdered."

"No," objected Madame de Persigny, "we are only doing this to amuse ourselves, and it amuses me to wear my hair down."

"If you will not do what the others do, do not appear in the *tableau* at all."

Finally she referred the question to the Empress.

"Let her do as she likes," said the Empress; "it is a novelty, and perhaps it will prove a success."

"No, no, she will spoil it all."

"Really, my dear Princess, what does it matter to you? She will look pretty in any case. Do not quarrel about it; be obliging. You know, poor Madame de Persigny, her mother, is out of her mind."

"Oh, her mother is out of her mind, is she?[1] Well, then, my father is mad too, and I will not give way."

She had her own way in the end.

We can gauge her pretty accurately; although at heart kind and good, the ambassadress had a very quick temper, as her friends found to their cost if they had the misfortune to draw down upon themselves some scathing remark—the direct outcome of her frankness.

On the other hand, those she liked found her most fascinating. Her cordial greeting, the appropriate word

[1] The Empress did not want to say that the Duchess herself was highly excitable and a trifle weak in intellect. We know the anxiety of the Duc de Persigny on this account. The Duchess's nervous irritability was not a secret for any of the guests at her parties in the Place Beauvau, or in her private house at Chamarade.

COUNT SANDOR, FATHER OF THE PRINCESS DE METTERNICH,
RIDING THE HORSE LION, WITH WHICH HE WON SEVERAL STEEPLE-CHASES

spoken at once, the personal touch which went straight home, her expressive eyes, and way of speaking, immediately conquered those whom she took the trouble to please. Octave Feuillet was charmed, fascinated, enslaved from his first meeting with her, when she at once turned the conversation to his novel *Sybille.*

But she knew what she was about—this astute ambassadress—when showing herself gracious and attentive to the great writer. When one is fond of the theatre it is worth while to be amiable and assiduous to an author like Feuillet. Was she not just planning a charade for the Empress's birthday party?

The next morning she confided to him her great project. She had thought of the appropriate word "*Anniversaire.*" "Sister Anne," for the first syllable, gave an easy subject to work out. *Hiver* (winter) had put a mischievous thought into her mind. She wanted the dashing Galliffet to appear flat on his stomach, like a man who has fallen on the ice and cannot get up again.

"Very good, Princess. But who is going to write the words?"

"You," she replied.

With this impetuous temperament matters were not allowed to drag.

They must begin at once. When the author met her again at the Château, twenty-four hours later, the Princess was already at work on her part. Octave Feuillet became the industrious author and skilful literary adviser. He thought he would be let off with that. Not at all. There was just one other character in the charade to be filled—the poor part of a gardener, which would fit him to a nicety; it had been kept specially for him. He tried to get out of it. Has the Prince de Reuss? . . . Would not Clermont-Tonnerre look much better in the costume of a shepherd of Louis Quinze? Vain excuses. She would hear none of them. He had just time to give instructions about the

scenery and get into his satin breeches. The play began. Presently the exquisite writer appeared from behind a screen, wearing a somewhat ridiculous costume, made up with powdered hair as an old man, wearing as best he could a crush-hat adorned with a wreath of flowers. On another occasion Octave Feuillet was compelled to appear as a traveller in an ulster and sailors' breeches, and the thought of appearing before their Majesties in that guise, or, worse still, later in the evening in spangled tights, was anything but pleasing to his dignity. He would have infinitely preferred to walk and meditate in the forest! But then the Princess knew so well how to soothe the soul of the author, encumbered by so many petty services. Hers was the heartiest applause. She gave the signal, and the elegant audience clapped their best; they shouted with enthusiasm. Poet and players were called before the curtain. Madame de Metternich would reappear, dragging the happy and guilty man to the footlights "before an idolizing public." And Octave Feuillet would end by thinking it delightful.

The rôle she so good-naturedly accepted was not always as easy as might be supposed. It was by no means a simple matter to maintain unbroken good-humour in that idle company. They were sometimes obliged to work hard to amuse each other. At Compiègne, as at the Tuileries, there were afternoons when, in the absence of hunting parties or forest picnics, the time hung heavy on hand.

One night, to while away the time before dinner, she invented a game in which flour and a buried ring figured. The players had to pick up the ring with their teeth without covering their noses with flour—a very difficult performance.

On wet days it was hard to imagine any form of entertainment with which to enliven the party. A charade was the most popular suggestion and generally restored

animation to the most languid. The prospect of choosing the costumes, the anxiety for becoming toilettes, the fun of rehearsal—all this enchanted the women.

Acting was the great resource. In any form whatever it was the dominant passion of Madame de Metternich. Dumb show and *tableaux vivants* she enjoyed equally, and arranged them effectively with the help of the intelligent and good-looking women who shared her tastes. She was a princess by birth, an artist by education, and a musician by temperament.

The divine fire burnt within her. She never flagged in learning long parts interspersed with songs, in organizing rehearsals, and settling every detail of the first nights with the help of the authors and those officials who presided over the amusements of the Court. She exalted her pleasure into work and duty.

It was well that an enthusiast and adept like Princesse de Metternich should keep a watchful eye on all this. But for her supervision many inaccuracies and awkwardnesses would have been passed over which no one else would have troubled to correct. Before her coming these amateurs thought only of laughing and enjoying themselves and were anything but critical. Thus on the Empress's birthday, November 15, 1857, an elaborate charade was given at Compiègne, written by Mérimée and Mocquart, the Emperor's private secretary. Rouland played to the general satisfaction the comic part of an *Auvergnat*, and displayed a histrionic talent wholly unexpected in the Minister of Public Instruction and Worship.

On the other hand, the actresses—mostly foreigners—vied with each other in mangling the verses, especially Lady Eglinton, who altered the rhymes, turned the dialogue upside-down, and added unnecessary syllables to the lines, in spite of which she remained serenely content

with herself and her audience. The Court was equally pleased.

Madame de Metternich put an end to all this. Henceforth these drawing-room pieces were to be spoken and acted as though by professional artists.

I have now under my eyes—very appropriately, as it chances—that somewhat rare volume *Le Théâtre de Salon*, by the Marquis Philippe de Massa, gentleman, soldier and author, playwright by appointment to the Court of the Tuileries. Director of the private theatres at Fontainebleau and Compiègne, he followed the example of the Duc de Morny in the improvisation of smart *vaudevilles* suitable for the use of princes and their guests. De Massa used to call Madame de Metternich his muse. His drawing-room pieces were seldom played more than once or twice; but he was fortunate enough to win hearty applause from the most fascinating hands and lips in creation.

Yes, here is the famous *Commentaires de César* (Cæsar's Commentaries), a comedy in two acts, produced in 1865, a topical review of events of the day, which was mounted, rehearsed, and for the most part played and sung, by Her Highness Princesse Pauline de Metternich.

Into this performance she threw an extraordinary warmth of zeal.

Once a play was accepted for performance, Madame de Metternich, wholly engrossed in her part and all that was expected of her, never stopped writing and working. Her daily correspondence was greatly increased in consequence. Every day she sowed her brisk little notes broadcast—notes such as she wrote to perfection on any subject, which some day will form one of the most curious and lively records of the period.

The Marquis de Massa, who from that time has kept up his friendly relations with the Princess, was naturally highly favoured in this respect. They had to discuss

a number of details, to settle about the interpretation of some part, to introduce some new feature, or make some slight change. Letters followed each other in quick succession.

"You must have many letters from the witty lady," I said to the Marquis de Massa, when we met unexpectedly at the Théâtre Français on the first night of Marcel Prévost's *La Plus Faible*—"pearls of price of which you must have been careful."

"You are mistaken," he replied. "I keep no more letters since in a moment of temptation some light-fingered person emptied my drawers of all I had."

By what black art can they have been conjured out of the Marquis de Massa's strong box, where he believed them safe in the Château de Ménars, to be put in circulation without a hint of their origin, or the name of the person to whom they were addressed? This is a mystery that has never been satisfactorily explained.

But at all events they are not lost for everybody. The contents of these letters written by the artiste to her poet are of the most innocent description—a mere interchange of ideas and collaboration from a distance. They show us day by day the progress of rehearsals and the advancement of theatrical studies.

They contain advice which she knew how to give in the happiest way with nice intuition and exquisite courtesy.

"Do not be angry," she says at the end of a long letter filled with critical remarks; "do not be angry with me for raising these difficulties about my part. I hate to make trouble, and I have been a long time making up my mind to speak to you about it. But your success depends greatly on certain points which I take the liberty of putting before you."

The question of the dresses interests her deeply. Moreover, she understands the subject. To draw up a scheme, get it sketched by Marcelin of *La Vie Parisienne*, and

carried out by Worth, or some other dressmaker; and then to see the results worn by the most charming of fashionable women for the pleasure of the whole company was her great delight. But there is hardly a point connected with the plays which does not interest her, or to which she does not give her most careful attention. Tastes differed as to the choice of entertainments. Some preferred living pictures; others fancy-dress balls or masquerades. Madame de Metternich did not raise objections to either. Obviously her predilections were for charades, comedies, and sparkling dialogues. In these, especially, her unflagging energy achieved wonders, and the Princess's closed fan might have been the magic wand of a fairy godmother. Always untiring, always in the thick of the fight, she sometimes complains a little of the lukewarmness of the rest of the company.

"You will see," she says to the poet of the play, "what trouble you will have with the actors and actresses. I know them; they are a dreadful race. I may say so, since I belong to it. Compiègne is about as well adapted for a serious rehearsal as I am to dance on Blondin's tight-rope."

How difficult it was to manage the brilliant company, and especially to get them to be accurate.

"Every one is on the rush from morning to night, and of course when the time for rehearsal comes every soul is worn out. No one turns up except the author and myself. So far, this has happened each time. We should have a good chance if the *statu quo* could be changed."

If they would only let her work; but instead of that, while she ponders over the play, writes about it and lives in it; while she is worrying to test every effect, inquiring into every detail, every adjunct, they are chattering noisily around her as if nothing of any importance were going on.

"I am interrupted at every turn. Boson (Prince de Sagan) chatters like a magpie. Bussières hardly ever

stops. Richard is as bad. My head spins, and I do not know what I am saying."

Richard Metternich was, in fact, much less in earnest. He was willing to lead the orchestra or play the piano if they wished, but felt no desire to go on the stage and repeat his lines.

"Do not count on Metternich," writes Madame de Pourtalès. "You can never be sure of him; he does not want to act."

No matter, the Princess works hard enough for two. Her industry is unrivalled; her willingness to learn, to recite or to sing has no limits. To the same correspondent she writes:—

"MY DEAR MASSA,—I will sing anything you like to give me, or anything the others do not care to take. I am telling you what I hope you know already, namely, that I am not too exacting. I am STUDYING my parts at the present moment, and I nearly know them all. This is my plan of campaign: the *cantinière* noisy, military, saucy; *La Grève*, simple—something between a clown and a fool—naïve, in the style of Alphonsine. Finally, the *Song*, very French, graceful, pretty, gay, sometimes with a good deal of attitude, sometimes laughing and sometimes sad. . . ."

A hitch frequently occurs. Every one has a complaint to bring forward—an alteration which demands the scissors. The Empress, too, slashes the verses in all directions. However, things fall into shape at last. The play begins to take form, and the company to work together. "I know my public well," says the stage manageress. A professional actress would not express herself otherwise.

One feels that she has no patience with delays. She longs to have the whole of the play in her hands, to know all the parts, and begin rehearsing. "The play! the

play!" she cries. If any unforeseen incident occurs she gets nervous, anxious. She is full of apprehension lest some inopportune event should postpone the performance.

"I am hoping so much, with all my heart, that the cholera will not prevent our going to Compiègne, or that some dreadful court mourning will not fall on us just on the eve of the performance. . . . I should be fit to hang myself on the nearest tree!"

On her journeys to Vienna, travelling along the roads which lead to her magnificent estates in Bohemia and Hungary, she carries her parts with her, reads them over, and works at them with the conscientiousness of a professional actress.

"VIENNA, *October* 29, 1865.

"I sing and sing again; I study, I rehearse; I am, in fact, in the thick of the play. . . ."[1]

And by dint of constantly walking the boards of the Compiègne theatre, insensibly carried away by her professional ardour, she gradually falls into the free-and-easy, somewhat slangy, speech of the music-hall stars:—

"As for the 'make-'em-sit-up' tune, it goes on greased wheels now, and I cannot think why I found it so difficult at first. . . . But I absolutely refuse the Spanish dance Boson talks of. I shall have enough to create with what you have already sent me. I have more than enough to hum and to patter. I am afraid lest my public will tire of me, for I am always in the front, as much as to say: You will have me, will you? There you are, then!"

But while indulging in all these pranks, for which her youth was sufficient explanation, and acting with the kind

[1] In the same letter she adds in her Princess's hand, "Quick, write me music for the song—

"'Macache turco
Macache cognaco. . . .'"

A small detail which, as we see, did not escape her eye.

of "devilry" which was peculiar to her, it must not be imagined that she forgot the dignity of the princess and ambassadress. The least offence to either put her instantly on the defensive :—

"Permit me to whisper to you, very, very low, that I refuse to sing that verse to the Emperor. I could not do it, and it would be ridiculous in my position as ambassadress. I beg that you will not make me burn a single grain of incense. . . ."

As for the more daring lines in the play, she showed herself no prude. But for others—for Compiègne generally, for the Mistress of the household, Madame d'Essling, with her timorous frowning airs—she requests that some of the more suggestive lines should be modified. In *Les Commentaires de César* she filled a double rôle. She personified Song, the genuine French *chanson*, while she also boldly played the part of "a knight of the whip." In the famous song of the hackney cab the allusion to the lowered blinds in these public conveyances had to be suppressed. But she quite relished the sly jokes of the rest of the piece, in which the worthy woman-cabby, for the sake of her family, fills the box seat for one day in place of her husband, who has gone on strike.[1]

1 LE COCHER.

En attendant, défense à quiconque de travailler. . . . Or, pas de pain à la maison ; les enfants crient ; alors, mon mari m'a donné le fouet. . . .

PRUD'HOMME.

Oh ! le rustre !

LE COCHER, *riant.*

Non ! non ! Pas comme vous l'entendez ! . . . Il m'a donné le fouet pour conduire sa voiture, et je vous assure que je ne m'en acquitte pas mal :

AIR DE : *Renaudin de Caen.*

. . . . . .

Tantôt sur la place on m'arrête
Et je charge un couple amoureux ;
La dame a la jambe bien faite. . . .
Le monsieur paraît fort heureux :

These theatrical audacities merely lasted their season—a kind of autumn fever which came and went with the holidays at Compiègne. The vertigo passed, and she resumed beneath her usual lofty affability the unmistakable style and tone of the *grande dame* and the proprieties of her rank.

One cannot with impunity call the close scrutiny of the public to one's least movements. In her reputed character of special adviser to the Empress Madame de Metternich's emancipated conduct laid her open to criticism, and the whole responsibility for the wild revels of the Court was

— Monsieur, madame, à quel endroit?
Du coin de l'œil on se concerte. . . .
"Allons où la campagne est verte;
Allons où la fougère croît!"
Le soir, c'est quelque bon ménage
Qu'on mène au bal, et, quelquefois,
Pour ne pas déranger la cage *
Le serin monte auprès de moi.

PRUD'HOMME, *galamment.*

Je comprends cela!

LE COCHER.

Merci!
Le samedi survient et, crac!
Pour la noce, il faut que j'attelle;
Et nous allons en ribambelle
Faire trois fois le tour du lac.
En rentrant, j'ouvre la portière,
Et souvent, dans l'intérieur,
J'ai retrouvé la jarretière
De la demoiselle d'honneur. . . .

. . . . . .

Sans que l'ambition m'assiège,
Haut placé, je suis fort content:
Combien d'autres qui, sur leur siège,
En devraient savoir faire autant!
Vous voyez que, dans tout Paris,
En voiturant jusqu'à leurs portes
Un tas de gens de toutes sortes,
J'ai beaucoup vu, beaucoup appris!
(*Les Commentaires de César*, Act. I, sc. VII.)

* La crinoline.

LES COMMENTAIRES DE CESAR
LA FRANCE
LA HANSON
l'Avenir.
L'INDUSTRIE L'ANGLETERRE L'AFRICAINE

laid at her door. All that took place was not wholly to the advantage of the witty, unconventional, and original ambassadress. Her good spirits and the exotic flavour, which came out in her taste for all that was free and fantastic, made her great success in Paris. She also met with some hostile criticism. Many epigrams at her expense, to which, however, she was wholly indifferent, flew the round of the Press. The sharpshooters of the daily papers frequently attacked the leading spirit of the Imperial entertainments and greatly exaggerated the consequences of her influence, while managing to increase the general interest in her doings. One writer in *Le Nain Jaune*, who at a later date turned some madrigals in her honour, called her Madame de *Risquenville.* Another writer in the *Charivari* found in the irregularity of her features a pretext for a sly joke which was eagerly swallowed by collectors of anecdotes. She was accused of an inordinate affection for dancing, play-going, and smoking cigarettes. Aurélien Scholl reproached her with "smoking like a steamboat," which was more spiteful than true. Reserving to herself in this respect the same liberty which the high-born ladies of Austria and Russia enjoy, she extended it also in private to her guests, and this was one of the privileges best appreciated by visitors at her house.

Such newspaper gossip was often retailed to her. She replied with a shrug of her shoulders and a sharp cutting sentence; and it never prevented her, as she would say, from "paddling her own canoe."

Some attacks touched her more deeply, reaching her in a more direct form. Her off-hand speeches, her audacious charm of manner, and her impulsive actions occasionally brought down upon her some harsh criticism.[1]

[1] Her freedom of speech, regardless of the effect it might produce on those removed from her immediate circle, amounted sometimes to imprudence. One day in 1867, during the Exhibition, she went out walking. Then the fancy took her to go and visit the International Show. Without waiting for

How the venomous Viel-Castel, among others, handled her name, I must leave my readers to judge from this single sentence, culled from his hatefully vindictive and abusive Memoirs :—

"Princesse de Metternich, who has adopted the ways and style of the light women, is a great favourite with the Empress, who invites her to all her parties; she drinks, smokes, and tells tales."

Very risky tales too, if it be true that she actually related the one he quotes as having been told at Trianon in the presence of the Emperor and the Household, but which we shall refrain from repeating.

Some hypercritical people reproached her publicly for her freedom, although frankness of speech is often merely a proof of less hypocrisy of heart. Such censures were written and published, and caused her some annoyance, as well they might.

At this time occurred an episode which, for the singularity of its circumstances, clearness of detail, and romantic ending, is worth recounting at length. I give it as it was told me by one of those who took part in it.

A book had just appeared, which created a considerable sensation: *Women of To-day* (*Les femmes d'aujourdhui*), by Guy de Charnacé. Some of the portraits—all presented in a uniform dress of delicate gallantry—were so nebulous in matter, so hazy in outline, as to be highly equivocal. No names were mentioned, but the likenesses were striking enough for the reader to make a good guess

her own carriage, she hailed a cab. With all the coolness of a foreign lady of exalted station she said, as though she were addressing one of her own servants—

"Coachman, drive me to the Champ de Mars," using the familiar *thou*. The cabman, either not recognizing the quality of the lady or else, like a good French citizen, wishing to give as good as he got, said waggishly, with an agreeable smile, "Thou sayest *thou* to me; then it is a case of love!"

Jules Janin told this tale to Philibert Audebrand, who passed it on to me one morning when giving free rein to his reminiscences.

at the originals.[1] Others, again, painted in clearer colours or traced in deeper outlines, betrayed at the first glance, in spite of anonymity, the salient features of the originals beyond all possibility of mistake. It is impossible, for instance, not to recognize the prototype of her whom the author satirizes as "Queen Pest," an illustrious foreign princess who carries her audacious freaks to the point of imitating certain spurious elegances. It was evident that the author intended to portray the Princesse de Metternich.

The pictures which compose the gallery—eighty in number—were for the most part flattering to their models. The seventy or seventy-five, whose virtues and charms are here extolled, hid beneath the rouge of modesty and pretended not to recognize themselves. Those, on the other hand, who were the objects of the author's attack resented it loudly and furiously. They declared they had been grossly libelled, outraged, disgraced. Feminine honour must be avenged. A council was called to consider the best means of punishing the daring writer.

[1] No secret is so well hidden that it does not at last leak out. The youthful faces of dazzling freshness, whose grace, elegance, suave modesty, or proud beauty is lightly veiled by a delicate subterfuge, are now for the most part lost in the shades of death or oblivion. Chance has placed the key of all these allusions in our hands. What need now prevent our making known these forgotten identities?

The first section of the portrait gallery, which is so large that it had to be divided into two volumes, was placed under the auspices of Madame de S——. This should be written Madame de Sancy-Parabère. The second section closes with a dedication to Madame de B——. This dedication only partially disguises the delicate silhouette of the amiable, if rather fast, Countess Marie de Bonneval. This little pastel presents in a few respectful and light touches the charming physiognomy of the Empress under the guise of a mysterious great lady called Blanche. It is an open secret that the disturbing Melytta was a Madame de Backendorf. But a far less vague personage passes across the canvas of the cinematograph when, under the aspect of the superb Heliodora, we announce the Countess de Castiglione. It is safe to say that Olympe is no other than the Duchesse de Brissac; that Henriette bears a striking likeness to the Duchesse de Bassano. We may attribute to the wife of Marshal Canrobert, the blue-eyed brunette born on Scottish soil, all the gifts and graces which inspired the *Ode to Myrrha;* to the Viscountess de Pic all the charms of Berthe, and to Madame de Sancy the legitimate

From this meeting of offended femininity a storm gathered and burst. In an excited gathering, at which de Charnacé's enemies rallied round Madame de Metternich, the account of "Queen Pest" was read aloud. The outcries began again with redoubled fury. With real or feigned indignation every feature was exaggerated. Should they endure it? No, certainly not. They agreed to send a champion to this audacious scorner of princesses. But the question was, who should be sent? The case called for a good swordsman, a sure avenger. Obviously there was but one person. All wondered why they had not thought of him sooner. The Marquis Colonel de Galliffet was the man.[1] Far too spoilt by women to be

pleasure she must have experienced when looking at herself in the mirror of Herminie. The enigmatic Eliane and the nebulous Laure remain mysteries. Yet many of those around them can be rebaptized with certainty.

One wonders why the writer dipped his pen in vinegar when describing, by the name of Diane the tempestuous and capricious huntress, the original Marquise de Beaulaincourt. No matter, it is certainly meant for her.

Imperia, with her pretty little face and coquettish deshabille, amuses and astonishes her public. She does not belong to the world of fashion, however; the fact is obvious. She is only Marguerite Bellanger. Then we see Odette with her flaming locks. Let us only whisper her name, for she is certainly not flattered in the picture—La Marquise de Galliffet. For this other pretty creature who wavers between a smile and a frown, according as the facets of the jewelled portrait of Hedwige la Blonde flash or grow dull in her eyes, read Viscountess de Janzé. But if Monsieur de Charnacé steeps his pen in rose water while sketching the lovely "keepsake" beauty of Betty—otherwise Madame de Pierres—I may say that Madame de Reculot owes him no thanks for the way in which he dresses and undresses her, figuratively speaking, on Calphurnia's easel. Thorns and blossoms are both offered to Aurore, the second Madame Emile de Girardin. And certainly brambles are twined in the wreath prepared for Marcella, otherwise Marcello, otherwise Duchesse Colonna, the fashionable sculptress. As for Madame de Lourmel, it is not with the intention of telling her she is as modest as the violet that he presents as its counterpart the reflexion of Lucette, who is so much in love with herself and her unfathomable dreams. But we will here conclude our list of personalities, sparing one sympathetic word in passing for Madame de Sapinaud, who is very roughly handled under the name of Madame Barbe-Bleue (Mrs. Bluebeard).

[1] "The faithful and noisy Galliffet whom I love for his great virtues, in spite of his many failings." (Letter from Princesse de Metternich to the Marquis de Massa, June 11, 1867.)

able to refuse them anything, he, on his part, was delighted with this adventure and the notoriety that might accrue. He did not hesitate to throw the glove: "Ladies, my sword and my loyalty are at your service." Thereupon he dispatched his heralds-at-arms—I mean his two witnesses—to the literary gentleman.

Monsieur de Charnacé had risen early that morning, with his mind entirely at peace, and without the smallest suspicion of the conspiracy against him. Tenderly considering some new beauty with whom to inflame his imagination while drawing her portrait, Monsieur de Charnacé was in the best possible frame of mind, when some one knocked at his door.

"What is there?"

"Two cards for Monsieur le Marquis."

He took them and glanced at the names.

"Show in the Count de Lau and the Prince d'Aremberg."

The ceremonious manner of the two gentlemen, their cold and stately greeting, the very way in which they seated themselves on the edge of their chairs, like people who have but one word to say, and intend to leave immediately afterwards, showed plainly they had not come as ambassadors of a pleasure party.

"We come," said Prince d'Aremberg, "from our friend Colonel de Galliffet to ask satisfaction for the malicious portrait you have been pleased to draw of the Princesse de Metternich."

Here was a proposal odd enough to excuse a moment's hesitation on the part of Monsieur de Charnacé as to the seriousness of this challenge which, as in the Middle Ages, was sent him by a knight-errant.

"Gentlemen," he replied, "I confess I am astonished. I did not know that Monsieur de Galliffet was the relative, or representative, of Madame de Metternich."

There was a shade of irony in the question. But Count

de Lau, who was not lacking in wit himself, refused to follow the Marquis's lead.

"We need not play on the words. We accomplish our mission. And we must ask you for a reply."

"But admitting that Monsieur de Galliffet has the right to take up the cause of a foreign princess with the authority of a husband, on what do you base the charge against me? On what grounds do you assert that I have sketched and criticized a princess whose name I have not mentioned."

"Really, it was not difficult to understand the allusion. The public are unanimous in declaring that in your portrait of 'Queen Pest,' drawn in such colours, you aimed directly at Princesse de Metternich."

"The voice of the public is nothing whatever to me. I have no reply to give you."

The Prince d'Aremberg then looked the Marquis de Charnacé full in the face.

"Sir, I address myself to a gentleman. Yes, or no, did you intend indirectly to convey to the world the impression that you were writing of the Princesse de Metternich?"

At this direct question Monsieur de Charnacé thought it best to fence no longer.

"Yes, gentlemen. To-night, at six o'clock, you will hear from my seconds."

And so it happened. The meeting-place was arranged at the Pigeon-shooting Club, in the Bois de Boulogne, an enclosed space where no interruptions need be feared. At five o'clock in the spring dawn duellists and seconds were to be on the spot. What would be the issue of a duel so lightly undertaken? De Charnacé's friends were not without fear for the result. De Galliffet's reputation as a swordsman was notorious. Monsieur de Charnacé had not touched his weapon for a long time. Was it not probable that he would be in a position of manifest inferiority to his antagonist? They had persuaded him the

night before to take some practice at a fencing school to get his hand in. The test must have been satisfactory, for the veteran master, the celebrated swordsman Robert, remarked to Charnacé's seconds, who were uneasy about de Galliffet's prowess—

"Monsieur de Charnacé is almost invulnerable."

They found it was true next morning, as the two men stood with their feet in the heavy dew beneath the still hazy sky. They threw themselves into position. Galliffet attacked like a lion, with all the fire of youth and temperament. Charnacé stood the assault and parried cleverly. His firm and steady attitude never wavered beneath the furious blows levelled at him. After a few minutes, during a renewed attack, Colonel de Galliffet suddenly paused. His seconds hastened up. Some signs were exchanged, and then a whispered conversation between the friends of either party. What was the matter? They explained the case to Charnacé. Monsieur de Galliffet complained that his wrist was stiff, and wanted to plunge his hand into a basin of cold water. The seconds considered the request inadmissible. Like the true gentleman of old descent that he was, Monsieur de Charnacé answered: "Let some one bring a basin at once." One of the club servants in red livery and blue stockings fetched water. The Marquis de Galliffet was able to cool his hand and relax the stiffness which was paralysing his efforts. The combat began again. It lasted some time longer, and then again the hot-blooded officer asked for the basin of cold water. Again they closed. The duel threatened to end only with the exhaustion of both antagonists. At last, however, it came to a conclusion in a tolerably satisfactory manner. In parrying one of Galliffet's rapid thrusts Monsieur de Charnacé's thigh came in contact with his adversary's sword. A small vein was torn. A drop of blood spurted up and stained the author's white trousers. Galliffet was unhurt.

Charnacé's wound was of the slightest. The witnesses then interposed and declared that honour was satisfied.

The duel had lasted thirty-five minutes. It had an epilogue worthy to compare with the most picturesque stories of sword and gown by Féval or Dumas. The night before a ball had been given by Baroness Schickler at the Place Vendôme. The news of the meeting to take place in the early morning had been bruited through the rooms. The company were extremely anxious as to the issue of the encounter. What happened in consequence?

On reaching his residence on the Boulevard Haussmann, Monsieur de Charnacé found, to his astonishment, a line of carriages drawn up outside his house. Two benches at the edge of the pavement were occupied by women in evening dress, friends who had come to inquire. . . . Another, very quietly dressed in a walking gown, stood somewhat aloof, looking in the morning mist not unlike one of the silent figures in Gérôme's pictures. When all the other ladies had driven off in their carriages, De Charnacé made his way to this solitary figure, and thanked her warmly for the generous impulse that had brought her there. It was then six o'clock. She must have slipped out of the conjugal apartment at the risk of her reputation; then having learnt that her friend was safe and sound, she had to return home on foot before her husband was awake. This heroic affection was the more touching because it was purely disinterested. There was no intimacy between them. He knew nothing of the woman, except that she had a sensitive and anxious temperament, responsive to all the emotions of nature, tenderness, and art. That implacable enemy, consumption, was slowly burning up the flower of her youth. He saw her once again in her last moments, and experienced the bitter sweetness of kissing her brow, already chilled by the gathering sweat of death.

This little diversion has led us far from our subject. The Charnacé-Galliffet duel was soon forgotten, and with it the causes which had led to it. Madame de Metternich continued to lead, or to follow, the whirlwind.

As a matter of fact, in the ordinary aspects of her life the wife of the Austrian ambassador was merely the clever partner of that regime with which the circumstance of her marriage had brought her in contact. She was not the inventor of *tableaux vivants*[1] nor of fancy dress balls, nor yet of those *cocodettes* of which the world called her the queen. She was in the train of events, and followed it at full speed, because her disposition prompted her to do so. Rather than be left behind, she boldly took the lead.

We spoke just now of *cocodettes*, a word at that time in every one's mouth, but the meaning of which has changed with time. The *cocodettes* were in the brilliant and fleeting escort of the Empress, the most beautiful, fascinating, and also the most aristocratic, of that flying squadron. Every young and pretty woman, French or foreign, yearned to belong to that set. The Countess Walewska told me an anecdote bearing on this point. She and her husband, the famous statesman, owned a hunting-box at Saint-Germain. In the neighbourhood lived a young American couple, recently married—a Mr. and Mrs. Thomson. This lady called on the Countess one afternoon to say good-bye.

"Why are you leaving?" asked Madame Walewska.

"Well, my husband and I have made up our minds to go to Biarritz. I like this place very much; it is quiet and

[1] Living or speaking pictures were no new invention in any case. Even in pagan times, in the market places of Athens and Sicyon, the priestesses of Venus, in the guise of Cypris or Diana, of the Hours or the Graces, rivalled the conceptions of the painters and sculptors. They learnt in the studios to represent the Olympian feasts. We know, too, that in the fashionable society of the eighteenth century these kinds of living symbols were very popular among the beauties of the theatre.

restful; but we must follow the Court, otherwise how can I get my name on the list of *cocodettes?*"

"Oh, is that your only reason for going away? You are anxious to get into the ranks."

"Yes, I want to be a *cocodette*, like many other foreigners I know, such as the Marquise de Villamerina, the Italian ambassador's wife; the daughters of Lord Cowley, the Duchesse Litta, Lady Douglas and Princess Troubetzkoï. You are not in the fashion," she added with childish petulance, "unless you are a *cocodette*."

And Princesse de Metternich, who, in spite of all social temptations, was always irreproachable in her family relations, saw no harm in associating herself with a group of young women, celebrated for beauty, luxury, and the charm with which they invested their somewhat dissipated tastes.[1] Unconventional herself, she was the more indulgent towards the high spirits of her neighbours. Besides, she never looked below the surface existence of other women, and half closed her eyes to follies which she was not forced to reckon as crimes.

When she was not at the Tuileries, Compiègne, or Fontainebleau, all the world of fashion in Paris passed through her drawing-rooms in the Rue de Varennes. This continued to the very close of the Imperial regime. In September, 1870, by force of circumstances, Richard de Metternich ceased to be Austrian ambassador to France.

For some years previously the flame had been burning low. The vitality and glow had waned. Life was prolonged

[1] Feeling a strong affection for her husband, she would ill have borne any infidelities from him. She arranged matters in such a way as to leave him no inclination. "How do you manage to make so sure of the Prince's constancy?" she was asked. "Oh, it is very simple," she replied briskly. "I clip his wings every morning." I do not guarantee the authenticity of the tale. Besides, as Richard de Metternich was a pleasing and fine-looking man, he must have had a few love affairs, if, for instance, it be true that his name was brought into the fourfold duel of which the beautiful Madame de Beaumont was both cause and object.

from day to day for life's sake. With anxious penetration Princesse de Metternich foresaw events ahead. She and Prince Richard Metternich still occupied the highest places; then the exuberant festival ended with a thunderbolt.

The blow went to their hearts, and their loyalty was never questioned, because it was obviously disinterested. Like his predecessor, Baron de Hübner, who might perhaps have been tempted at one time to believe himself the evil eye of this Government which sprang from force of arms, Prince Richard never swerved from his loyalty to the Emperor and to France. Just as he held the Empress in a sort of chivalrous affection, so his wife had a frank liking for the Emperor, and for the many good qualities concealed beneath his natural indecision and apparent coldness.

But there are forces stronger than that of personal sympathy. At the critical moment Prince Metternich was compelled to maintain the strictest neutrality in obedience to the orders of his Government. Messieurs de Beust and Andrassy each in turn sent to the embassy in Paris instructions which left no room for misunderstanding, and made it clear that he must leave the Imperial Government under no illusions as to the attitude of Austria; on the contrary, he was to convince the Emperor that in case he undertook an inopportune war with Prussia or Germany, Austria would give no assistance.

Shall we say that doubts have been expressed on this point? It has been asked, with some show of truth, whether the Austrian ambassador and his wife, whilst throwing themselves heartily into the gaiety of the country, had not at heart been more or less opposed to the policy which destroyed the hopes and aims so dear to the ancient Austro-Germanic Empire.

Another point which has never been satisfactorily cleared up—a question never answered by Prince Metter-

nich—is the riddle of the last minutes he spent with the Empress when she abandoned the Tuileries, driven out by the imminent rising of the populace.

Still hugging the illusion of a remnant of authority, Eugénie resisted all counsels of abdication, and although realizing the extent of the disaster which had overtaken her, she was far from accurately gauging the rapidity with which events were ripening in the excited capital. "There is no hurry, gentlemen!" she said calmly when urged to receive Monsieur de Gardonne, who had just hastened from the Legislative body, where already the revolutionists had torn down and scattered the Imperial emblems. The crowd was now howling at the gates. The time had come to flee. The last farewells were spoken. The ladies of the palace and the Empress's other faithful friends took their departure, their anxiety somewhat reassured, since Admiral Jurien de la Gravière had placed the Imperial fugitive under the protection of the ambassadors of the two great powers, Austria and Italy: the Chevalier Nigra and the Prince de Metternich. The latter had given a firm promise: "I undertake the whole responsibility."

The itinerary of the departure is well known. It was thought best to return to the Imperial apartments in order to cross the Louvre and leave the palace by the door opening on the Place Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. Hurriedly crossing the Hall of State, they traversed the whole left wing of the Tuileries through the Empress's private apartments. Through the door of the Museum, they passed through the picture galleries, to the staircase leading to the Assyrian Collections, and finally reached the little doorway leading into the Place. The ex-regent left the Louvre whilst the crowd were collecting and advancing on the opposite side of the palace. The Empress took the arm of Prince Metternich. Nigra and Madame Lebreton were also beside her. They paused by the door: "Wait for me here," said Richard to the two women, "I will bring

up my carriage, which I left higher up on the quay—a carriage without arms and with one white horse." The two men, Nigra and Metternich, then disappeared. Meantime the crowd grew greater every moment during their prolonged absence. Madame Lebreton hailed a cab, helped her mistress into it, and gave the address of a friend: "Besson, Councillor of State, Boulevard Haussmann." We know the rest; the further orders to drive to the Avenue de Wagram, to the house of Monsieur de Pierres, the Empress's chamberlain, only to find him also absent, and finally to Dr. Evans, in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne.

Meantime, what were Nigra and Metternich doing? No doubt the crowd setting towards the Place Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, swept them away from the ladies whom they had undertaken to protect. They committed a serious blunder in thus leaving the Empress at such a moment, exposing her, if only for a short time, to the mercy of a riotous crowd. This is the charge from which Imperialist writers have never been able to exculpate the ambassadors[1] when dealing with the history of the events of September 4, 1870.

Be this as it may, it was with emotion and regret that Madame de Metternich left the great city in which she had passed ten very happy years of her life, amid scenes of unheard-of splendour and brilliance. Yet it was only personal affections and sympathies that she left behind her. In her own country she was destined to take up again the sovereignty of fashion which she had so success-

[1] There is a shadow of reproach in the apparently simple words of Madame Carette: "The ambassador of Austria who had held a singularly favoured position at Court and had always loudly proclaimed his attachment to the Empress, etc.," while in a conversation with me, the author expressed herself far more strongly. (See *Souvenirs des Tuileries*, vol. 1) A reproach, a suspicion of neglect which perhaps is scarcely justified, but which certainly was consciously or otherwise in the mind of the writer.

fully wielded in Paris; she was still to give the tone and lead the movement of the world around her.

A throne had been shattered beneath her eyes. Elsewhere, she found another Imperial court in which her place was still reserved for her near to the highest in the land. Lady-in-waiting by right of birth, and taking precedence after the archduchesses at Vienna, she enjoyed once more all the prerogatives of her aristocratic rank, which she had sometimes been pleased to forget in the revels at Compiègne.

The past was dead. She meant to begin life anew. Those are happy and wise," said Queen Christine, "who are able to take advantage of every occurrence." She was forced to turn her back on Paris and the recollection of the most brilliant court in the world; but the position she enjoyed in the Austro-Hungarian capital, her important connexions, her wealth, and her fine properties compensated for much that she had lost.

In the highest Viennese society, temperament is restrained by etiquette. Madame de Metternich did not immediately become the dominant influence there. She encountered some resistance from the immediate circle of the Imperial Family. Some were, or pretended to be, shocked at the Parisian reputation of the ex-ambassadress. Besides this, other susceptibilities were touched. From her first arrival in Vienna she became popular. When she drove out at the same time as royalty, the Emperor Francis Joseph observed with some displeasure that she was more heartily cheered than the Empress.

These initial difficulties soon disappeared. It is impossible to escape the ascendency of a disposition like hers, in whatever sphere it is exercised. She soon took the sceptre of fashion from the hands of the Princess von Schwartzenberg and kept it.

Her house became the centre of Viennese society. The reception rooms of the magnificent palace of the

PRINCESS DE METTERNICH IN 1905

Metternichs on the Rennweg, which she occupied as long as her husband lived, were opened not only to the privileged by birth, rank, or official position, but also to the leading writers and artists.

To give great receptions and state dinners; to maintain a regular correspondence with European sovereigns and the most illustrious personalities of the world; to reply in her bold, majestic hand (one of the most distinctive autographs known to collectors) to all who, from far or near, addressed themselves to her; to keep herself informed of the best contemporary literature both of France and of Germany, and especially of Paris—all this scarcely sufficed her energetic temperament and enterprizing zeal. Innumerable ideas flashed through her mind which she sought to catch on the wing and to realize.

Her friends seconded her, either financially or by their actions, influence, and cordial devotion. First among these stands Baron Nathaniel Rothschild, a great admirer of the Princess, the friend whom she wittily nicknamed *mein Hausjud* (my house Jew);[1] and Baron Edgar de Spiegel, the daily confidant of her thoughts; clever and kind, highly esteemed in Vienna as the leader and Mæcenas of the "Society of Men of Letters," who literally worshipped her.[2] Supported also by the sympathy of aristocratic circles, she began once again to invent, to organize, to arrange and send out programmes of entertainments and plays, with various objects in view.

Princess Metternich's tastes had not changed with

[1] Baron Nathaniel being a confirmed bachelor, Madame de Metternich was good enough to do the honours of the banker's house when he gave great receptions.

[2] In 1903, Monsieur de Spiegel, in reply to a question which I put to him concerning Madame de Metternich, thus expressed the generous warmth of his feeling for her: "Of a life so full of initiative, so diverse and so invariably crowned with success, I should like to tell you everything. Several chapters would not suffice. It would require a volume—a very large volume."

events. With renewed ardour, she inspired her poets, scene painters, and actors; distributed parts, supervised invitations, and, if possible, receipts and expenditure. She remained, as we have watched her bustling to and fro between Paris and Compiègne, always in search of novelty, ever ready to co-operate in anything which turned to amusement, joy, or charity.

There were blue, white, or red *redoutes*, fancy-dress balls, accounts of which filled the daily papers, charity performances at which the great lady and former artiste reappeared, showing conclusively that she would have been an actress of the first rank had not fate made her a princess. At the Ringtheater, where the famous Sonnenthal had the honour of playing with her, she was an admirable peasant;[1] elsewhere she appeared as nurse, governess, village girl, or queen. At the Castle of Auesberg she took the part of the glove-maker in the dialogue with the Brazilian from *La Vie Parisienne.* On another occasion she made a sensation when Got, of the Comédie Française, acted with her in *Le Dîner de Madelon.*

Age had not diminished her high spirits or weakened her imaginative power. We might apply to Princesse de Metternich the words spoken by Voltaire of the Duchesse de Maine: "This is a predestined soul; she will love the theatre to her last breath."

At intervals she found time to patronize the new school of music. Just as thirty years earlier she had taken up Wagner and extolled with all her might the despised *Tannhäuser*, so she now adopted Smetana and his *Bartered Bride;* but with more immediate chances of success, since the triumph of this lyric drama, over which so many battles were waged, justified her faith at its first hearing.

But who in Europe or America has not heard of her

[1] Some time later, Adolphe Wilbrandt wrote expressly for her his play, *Von Angesicht zu Angesicht*, in which she also played with Sonnenthal.

"Musical and Theatrical Exhibition," which was opened in the Rotonda in Vienna. This was a wonderful inspiration, for which a great deal of money was required. She advanced all she could herself, then turned to her friends to make up the deficiency.

"I walked," she said, "into every house *with caryatides*."

It must have been difficult in her presence for the caryatides to preserve their rigid attitudes. She did better than this, however. She wrote an autograph letter to all the ladies of good position in Vienna, inviting them to a party at her house. Three hundred responded to her invitation. They hastened thither, highly flattered and filled with curiosity. All fell into the snare. The Princess handed round the hat for the sake of her great work. They filled it, and the exhibition could then be opened.

All the thousand and one accessories of dramatic art were collected there; the rare, the commonplace, the precious, and the simple; inestimable treasures side by side with jewellery of the most artificial description; real works of art with the commonest tinsel of the footlights.

France sent manuscripts by illustrious authors, pictures and casts; England, musical instruments, ancient and modern; the Grand Duke Alexander of Weimar contributed several autograph manuscripts of Schiller and Goethe, and a quantity of documents illustrating the evolution of the German theatre, from Hanswurst and improvised comedy, to the latest modern creations. Costumes, pictures, objects of interest abounded. It was a magnificent success. Madame de Metternich had devoted herself body and soul to its preparation; to her, it seemed like a return to the best days of the Second Empire, when the extravagances of the ambassadress of Austria were the wonder of a nation. She was caricatured sitting on the roof of her exhibition playing a musical box, on which was inscribed in her honour the name of "Paulinophone."

Shortly after this, heavy sorrows fell to the lot of

Princesse de Metternich, breaking the long continuity of joy and triumph which formed the almost theatrical setting amid which her life had been played out.

She could not, however, resign herself to a life of retirement and solitude, but henceforth she devoted herself more and more to such forms of philanthropy as take the guise of social functions.

In reality she has never ceased to occupy the public mind, whether she is trying to form a link between the aristocracy and the world of art, in a land where so many distinctions of parties, creeds, and sentiment raise barriers between the hearts and minds of the various classes, or whether she is leading the imagination of her public into the paths of humanitarianism, by means of spectacular display and elaborate stage settings. On June 4, 1904, with the cordial co-operation of Baron Spiegel, she organized the most gorgeous *corso* ever seen on the Prater in the light of a beautiful spring day. And on the eventful morning of the opening, the Princess de Metternich, always delighted to write letters, whether for her own personal gratification, or for the good of the community, sent us an account of the happy preliminary doings in the following personal communication :—

"Yes, we shall have a battle of flowers presently, of quite a new kind, in motor-cars, accompanied by a procession on foot, all the women carrying sunshades covered with flowers. The motor-cars will also be decorated with flowers. Thus we shall have gaiety, charm, and elegance for those on foot as well as those who are driving. Each will have a share of the brightness, the perfume, and the pleasure. The fête promises to be exceptionally brilliant, and I believe the spectacle will be very fine."

It was so in fact. The Viennese newspapers gave glowing accounts of the carnival.

Such intelligent and lavish expenditure of all her re-

sources of imagination and influence have won an immense popularity for this Princess, who throws herself *con amore* into all she undertakes. When in May, 1886, she opened the first "flower fête" and appeared in her handsome carriage on the Prater, the air rang with shouts of applause. She was the idol of the day. A celebrated Austrian writer has called her "Notre Dame de Vienne" (Our Lady of Vienna). Another launched this aphorism: "The real Man of Vienna is our Lady of Vienna." A third, seeking in vain to find her equal among the most celebrated women in the world, has called her "The Incomparable." Finally, a quatrain went the round of the city, which is still sung by the Viennese:—

Es giebt nur a Kaiserstadt,
Es giebt nur a Wien;
Es giebt nur a Fürstin,
Es ist die Metternich Paulin!

(There is but one Imperial city, and that is Vienna; there is but one princess, and that is the Metternich, Pauline.)

Here we have indeed the very last word of fame; it is the "los" of the people, the elect of the public and fashionable life, which at all times and at all cost has been most eagerly sought by the elect of public and worldly life.

If in her headstrong youth Madame de Metternich laid herself open to some criticism, it must be conceded that her wit, her energy and her personality have helped her to fill most admirably her double part on the stage of two capitals.

CHAPTER VI

THE SALONS OF A MINISTER OF STATE

COUNTESS WALEWSKA

I

Direct evidence — Reminiscences and souvenirs — At Florence — Youthful impressions—A son of Napoleon I—Tradition and history of the great man's love affairs—How Marie Anne de Ricci became Countess Walewska —Presentation at Court—A letter from Madame Adélaïde—Walewski ambassador to London—A letter from Napoleon III—At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris—A great fancy ball—Fêtes and receptions.

ONE afternoon in 1904, while calling on Madame Octave Feuillet, I happened to mention the fact that an hour earlier I had been listening to Madame Walewska's anecdotes about the Court of the Tuileries, at which she had been one of the brightest ornaments.

"Ah yes," she said, "pretty Madame Walewska!"

As she spoke I observed that Madame Octave Feuillet's mind had reverted to the past, and that by virtue of the inner vision, which can pierce and illuminate the darkest depths of memory, she saw her once again, young, happy, fêted, moving through rooms filled with light and luxury, with movement and harmony. That was long, long ago.

In London Madame Walewska was known as the ambassador's wife, in Paris as the wife of a minister of state, and in the cosmopolitan society of the Tuileries as one of the leading ladies of fashion. Sovereigns, indeed,

ANNE-MARIE DE RICCI, COUNTESS WALEWSKA

were at her feet. The Empress had a great friendship for her. Queen Victoria showed her special affection. With Elizabeth Empress of Austria—the prettiest woman in her empire, so it was said—she spent delightful weeks. The most celebrated men gave brilliance to her receptions. And the greater part of her life was but the clear and radiant reflection of her husband's exceptional position, and of the important international affairs in which he played a part.

She herself confided to me the most interesting details in her eventful life, just as they chanced to recur to her mind, in the course of a number of charming interviews. In thus transcribing them, I am merely setting down, so to speak, a series of written conversations.

Florentine by birth, French by marriage, counting amongst her Italian ancestors several illustrious alliances leading back to Machiavelli, and descended on her mother's side from the Polish princes Poniatowski, her genealogical tree shows a complicated ramification of branches.

Niece of Joseph Poniatowski, minister of Tuscany and afterward senator of the Empire, she was born on the banks of the Arno, in the home of the Ricci family, not far from the Orlandini palace, where the Princess Mathilde spent the early years of her youth. She was christened Marie-Anne. Her childhood was wholly devoid of incident. She was gay, frolicsome, mischievous, like any other child of her age; hearty laughter and frantic races beneath the fine trees in the park pleased her better than study. The only tiresome things she knew in life were her lessons with a French governess, who, it appears, was anxious to make her understand the duty of obedience and, in order to impress it upon her forcibly, occasionally whipped her pretty severely.

Without care for the future, Marie-Anne gave free rein to her thoughts and her dreams, in which no ambition

mingled. She drank in the pure air of youth, without curiosity for the secret of to-morrow. An offer of marriage interrupted this innocent serenity of mind. Her hand was sought by an amiable nobleman, the son of a prince. She had never thought of marriage, and was in no hurry to leave her mother's side. Nevertheless, the Marquise and her father, thinking the proposed match both flattering and advantageous, would have agreed to the match. The old Prince Corsini, however, was less willing to second his son's desires. He formally refused his consent. With more docility than filial affection, the lover, who was willing to wait, but not at all anxious to be disinherited, offered to postpone marriage until the inexorable law of nature should have made him Prince in his turn and his own master. But the girl disliked the thought of counting the days and weeks, the months and years, until the death of his father, in order to light the torch of Hymen at the candles of the bier. The matter accordingly was dropped. Other candidates appeared; a certain Marquis de San-Juliano from Naples, Count Schomberg, a Viennese noble, an inveterate brawler, who, for a word, a glance, a joke, a nothing, was always ready to draw his sword, and who was eventually the victim of his quarrelsome spirit, for he was killed in a duel with a banker, the last man he was able to provoke.

It was at this juncture that Count Walewski appeared in Florence: Alexandre Colonna Walewski, born in Poland, the son of the woman, celebrated for her beauty and her patriotism, who inspired Napoleon I with a passionate attachment.

The sentimental episode of which this lady was the heroine has already been painted in romantic colours, and some day the stage will assuredly make use of it.[1]

[1] In 1905 a curious work in two volumes was published in Polish upon the first Countess Walewska.

On January 1, 1807, the Emperor, travelling from Pulsturck to Warsaw, stopped to change horses at the town of Bronic. A deluded crowd filled the streets, anxious to greet the soldier of fortune in whom they hoped to find the deliverer of Poland. Two women, not without danger, succeeded in getting quite near to him. One, almost a child, with great blue eyes, very candid and very tender, seemed quite transfigured by enthusiasm. Bonaparte, surprised and touched at this vision, flung her a flower, inquired who she was, and expressed his intention of seeing her again.

Her name was Marie Walewska, *née* Laczinska, of an old, but impoverished, family. Her husband, Anastase Colonna de Walewice-Walewski, a man of seventy, was a descendant of the Colonnas, the illustrious family which gave to the Church a pope and several cardinals, and to Italy a number of generals and diplomatists. This family splendour, however, and the title of chamberlain bestowed on her husband by the late King, did not prevent the young wife from finding her days very monotonous, without amusement or gaiety. One child, a son, brightened her life. She devoted herself entirely to him. Thus, in spite of her delicate beauty, she was almost unknown outside her own home.

The Emperor, the conqueror, the leader of armies and of nations, had noticed her. She was apprised of the fact. She trembled; a secret presentiment kept her at home; she refused to take part in any of the entertainments organized in honour of Napoleon. She was invited, however, by special messenger, in the person of Prince Joseph Poniatowski. Who may resist the wish of the Emperor? She must go to Warsaw. Even her husband advised it. And so she attended the ball, where rumours of the adventure were already current. She declined to dance and went home, nervous and uneasy. One after another letters reached her, all written by the Imperial hand, and each

containing an ardent declaration. A deputation waited upon her. The most highly respected Polish leaders all impressed upon her that she must be present at the dinner to which the Emperor invited her, unless she wished to appear a bad patriot, a bad Pole. There was no escape. One insidious friend whispered in her ear while she dreamed of her quiet home and her child: "Anything, everything, for this sacred cause!" The members of the provisional Government implored her not to lose sight of the good she might accomplish by her gentle, womanly influence. Meantime, the letters succeeded each other. Her husband, like many others under similar circumstances, seems to have had his eyes covered with a threefold bandage. He insisted on her going to the banquet. He even went further: he scolded and commanded her. The decisive step is nearly taken. She foresees it and dreads it in her virtuous soul. But still they urge her, and press her to make up her mind. The carriage awaits. She is pushed into it.

At table, seated opposite to the Emperor, she must needs listen with a smile to the suggestions of the go-between, Duroc. Soon, in the confusion of quitting the table, she had to face the direct attack of the Master. A request for a rendezvous was made to her. She answered with indignation, only to be reproached for her lack of patriotism. "Can a loyal Pole think and act in this way?" Worn out, at last she spoke the expected words: "Do what you like with me."

In the morning she is taken to the palace, to be handed over in the evening to those who will deliver her to the Imperial lover. She moves with a forlorn step. Napoleon enters the apartment and plays his part. Alone with him, she pleads and weeps. He grows angry, but waits till morning, when fatigue and weakness must surely break down her last resistance. The next day, at the same hour, the attack begins again. Napoleon shows himself an

ardent lover. He implores and threatens. A woman is there, at his orders, in his house, and talks of faithfulness to her marriage vows, to her conscience and religion! What does it mean? At the violence of his voice she grows terrified and almost swoons. And so she became his mistress.

Thus, in a kind of official history, the details of this meeting are related by Frédéric Masson. In reality they were far simpler, and from a surer, because more intimate, source, I have an accurate account of the Emperor's sentiments for the first Madame Walewska. In all things Napoleon was the hasty, imperious man who could never bear to lose time. Madame Walewska, very simple, very candid, wholly without personal ambition, and anxious only to obtain as the price of her obedience the reconstitution of the kingdom of Poland, yielded to the will of the victor of Austerlitz and visited him one evening. He entered the room as though it were his study, with anxious looks and occupied evidently with things wholly remote from love.

He unbuckled his belt and flung his sword on the table. In curt, imperative tones he questioned the young woman, who was resting in the dusk of the alcove. He demanded the names of the leading men in the town and other information about the Polish situation. Whilst she made stammering and nervous replies he took a few rapid notes. This accomplished, he appeared to remember the real object of the rendezvous and reverted to his tender fancy.

From this time the soldier seems to have entertained a sort of intermittent passion for her who only dreamed of being the ambassadress of her oppressed people. She often spoke to him of her beloved Poland; he would smile, but evade a reply. No head of a state ever yielded less to the intervention of women, where politics were concerned, than did Napoleon. During the campaign of 1809 Marie Walewska went to Vienna, where a luxurious apart-

ment had been prepared for her close to Schönbrunn. She there became enceinte, and returned to Walewice for her accouchement, giving birth on May 4, 1810, to Alexander-Florian Joseph Colonna Walewski.

She afterwards went to Paris, where the Emperor continued to take a great interest in her, and allowed nothing to be omitted that could contribute to her happiness or comfort. In 1812 a special act was passed in the palace of Saint-Cloud to establish in favour of her son an entail consisting of estates in the kingdom of Naples, with the title of Count of the Empire.

This was the Walewski, soldier, author, diplomatist, and statesman, who eventually asked the hand of Marie-Anne de Ricci. At that moment he held no office or appointment,[1] but he was known to be a personal friend of Thiers, and a road opened out before him paved with bright hopes.

Four years earlier—that is in 1842—he had already visited Florence and made the acquaintance of the Ricci family. The second time he came to Tuscany he was not alone, but travelling with the Count de Flahaut, who particularly desired to see him married to his own daughter Georgine. She, however, was destined for another, and subsequently became the Marquise de la Valette. According to Madame Walewska, Thiers would not have been sorry to see Walewski united to Mademoiselle Félicité Dosne. "Mademoiselle Dosne," she said, not without a spice of malice, "who is still unmarried in 1905."

But Walewski had made his choice. He was not in Italy as a tourist. His departure had been precipitated by grave events. In Paris he had been intimately connected

[1] It has been stated that his ambitious dream was the throne of Poland, and that he only took the sword when disappointed of the crown. Like Morny, he went through the African campaign, after claiming his French nationality, and then turned his attention to diplomacy. He had married first in 1831 Lady Catherine Caroline Montagu, daughter of the sixth Earl of Sandwich, who died in 1834.

COUNT COLONNA WALEWSKI, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN LONDON

with the actress Rachel—as intimately perhaps as it would be possible to be—and one evening, repairing to her house to pay her an unexpected visit, he had the disagreeable shock of meeting there the Duc de Grammont. The rupture which followed was immediate and irrevocable. He made his way to Italy, determined to return married.

A powerful attraction prompted him to seek once more the beautiful girl who had fascinated him on his former visit. They met again, and the glow of the Italian sun inflamed his soul. From that time he called her: His Destiny.

This natural son of Napoleon I had a very distinguished bearing. His face bore a striking likeness to Talma's Imperial friend, but with greater charm of expression. Quite the aristocrat: a man of the world, eagerly sought after in fashionable society, serious-minded and decided in character, he neither concealed nor displayed his gifts. Nevertheless, he did not at first make any great impression on Marie-Anne, who was still engrossed with the trifles which amuse youth, and whose glance remained indifferent when she was presented to this stranger, who, with a profile like that on a Roman coin, and his fine figure, was justly considered one of the handsomest men of his time. She did not, however, resist his appeal, and left Florence without great regret, uneasy only lest her inexperience of life should place her at a disadvantage in that new world to which her marriage would introduce her. He was her senior by fifteen years, and had authority and experience; therefore when he undertook to teach her all she needed to know, her fears were soothed. From the first day, his prudent council gave her a rule of conduct, which could not fail in time to place a pretty woman, gifted with intelligence and tact, on an equality with her surroundings, however brilliant they might be: "Look and listen."

Fair as young wheat, with bright eyes of greyish blue, refined features, a delicate profile, and all the animation

and grace of beauty on a small scale, she was welcomed with smiles. At the Château de Neuilly a kindly welcome awaited her from the Royal Family, and she created an excellent impression. The following day Mademoiselle Adélaïde, sister of Louis Philippe, wrote to Monsieur de Flahaut, First Equerry to the Duc d'Orléans and ambassador at Vienna, the following lines, the original of which we have seen :—

"Last night at Neuilly we had Lady Sandwich, who introduced to us—the Queen and all the princesses being present—the new Countess Walewska. This young woman is charming; she is more than pretty, because she has the ornament of natural simplicity. She will be a great success in Parisian society. "LOUISE-ADELAÏDE."

Meantime Walewski was still without any official position. Guizot was in power. The minister looked on him with an unfavourable eye on account of his friendly relations with his antagonist Thiers. He had not the smallest inclination to give him any diplomatic post. Friends intervened, praising his talents to Guizot, who still held out. Finally, the statesman allowed himself to be persuaded to abandon his motives for this exclusion, but only to send the young man far away to La Plata. He and his wife stayed as short a time as possible in South America. By the strange irony of events, on February 24, 1848, the very day on which the Constitutional Monarchy fell beneath the paving-stones of the barricades, Guizot signed the nomination of Walewski as Minister Plenipotentiary to Copenhagen. He was not called upon to pack his trunks, however.

The Presidency of Louis Napoleon richly compensated his past disappointments. Appointed ambassador to Florence in 1849, he was transferred in 1852 to the Embassy in London. The cleverness with which Walewski, in the face of serious obstacles, obtained from the British

Government the recognition of Napoleon III, was the principal feature of his stay in the United Kingdom.

"Matters did not go as smoothly as might have been supposed," Madame Walewska confided to us. "I was in London. I can see once more all the agitation which surrounded this great formality. The English Government had accepted the Empire; but did not care to recognize it under the name of Napoleon III, which would extend and strengthen the dynastic principle in the past.

"My husband was astonished at the subterfuges and difficulties which were raised, but he would not yield. Baron Brunow, the Russian minister, secretly fermented the opposition. England continued to object that, by accepting Napoleon as the third Emperor of the French, she stultified her past policy and darkened the glory of Waterloo. The most she could do would be to acknowledge the title of Napoleon II, for the very good reason that the Duke of Reichstadt had never reigned.

"The discussion dragged on. Then a few days before December 2, 1852, came the dinner given by the Prussian minister in London, Baron Bunsen, to the diplomatic corps. Earl Derby the Prime Minister, Lord Malmesbury Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lord and Lady Palmerston, the Italian minister d'Azeglio, were the guests at this magnificent reception.

"My husband had instructed me to undertake Lady Derby after dinner, whilst he would confer with the English minister, and to let it be understood—in order that it might be repeated—that if the Prime Minister refused to sanction the proposals made to him by the French ambassador, Lord Palmerston, his rival, would not fail to provoke a question in the House of Commons, which would entail the downfall of the Cabinet to the advantage of the Opposition.

"'You must make up your mind,' he was saying mean-

while to Earl Derby. 'For if you do not do it, Palmerston will acknowledge Napoleon III, and will gladly profit at your expense.'

"This argument settled the matter. Walewski had sounded Lord Palmerston in the same direction, and he, eager to seize an opportunity of returning to power, was already preparing to ask the question of Lord Derby and secure a majority. There was no further opposition. Lord Derby gave way.

"Next morning my husband received this letter from Napoleon III:—

"'THE TUILERIES, *December* 3, 1852.

"'Thank you for your telegram of yesterday, which so well reflects the warmth of your heart. I thoroughly appreciate this fresh proof of your devotion. I beg you to count at all times on my sincere friendship, and to believe that I consider myself happy to possess in you so able and loyal a representative. "'NAPOLEON.'"

He had not long to wait for his reward. He was first senator, then he became minister. Those were the palmiest days of the English alliance to which France sacrificed so many of her interests. When Countess Walewska left London the ladies of the aristocracy subscribed to give her a bracelet as a souvenir of her visit.

They were now magnificently lodged in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the most luxurious in Europe. To inaugurate their move, and with it many other happy circumstances, on February 17, 1856, the minister and his wife gave a ball which has become historic among the great entertainments of the Second Empire. This was the fancy-dress ball at which the Emperor in a domino, and Madame de Castiglione as Queen of Hearts, were so much talked about.

At a time when the vogue of the crinoline had brought up again the fanciful exuberance of *paniers*, and reminiscences of the days of the Pompadour were generally prevalent, Madame de Walewska, quick to seize the spirit of the moment, revived the eighteenth century in her own house.

Without any prearrangement to harmonize the details of their costumes on the general lines of the period, almost all the ladies arrived in Louis Quinze gowns. Powdered marquises were resuscitated in the persons of the Princesses Mathilde, Murat, and Poniatowska. Madame Dubois de Lestang appeared as a *grisette* of the Regency, in a simple and coquettish *négligé* designed by Jeaurat, General Fleury's wife exaggerated still more the style of a bygone day and, in order to be able to wear the fullest and widest *paniers* possible, she took up a great deal of room as lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie Antoinette, in a dress copied from a picture by Moreau the younger.

Only one of these high-born ladies ventured to appear without the cumbrous cage: Madame de Castiglione, who had earned already a reputation for independence, and who, moreover, had nothing to regret, being perfect in every line of her figure.

As for the mistress of the house, dressed as a Diana of the royal ballets, copied exactly from one of the prettiest designs supplied by Boquet to the King for the Menus-Plaisirs, compliments were showered on her in her disguise as a powdered huntress. She seemed to have stepped, freshly decked out, from some frame of the period. She was the life and radiance of the entertainment.

Other receptions followed, no less sumptuous. They soon won a great reputation in Parisian society. The dinners and balls of the Minister of Foreign Affairs were the most brilliant in the capital. When, at the zenith of his career, Walewski, on the suggestion of Count de Buol-Schauenstein, was nominated to preside at the Congress of

Paris, the plenipotentiaries of Europe were loud in their praises of the magnificent receptions given by the chief of the diplomatic corps to the élite of Parisian society.

The first sitting of the Congress took place on February 25, 1856, and the same evening Count Walewski gave a dinner to thirty persons, followed by a grand concert, for which eight hundred invitations were sent out.

At that moment all minds were bent towards peace and all eyes fixed on the representatives of the Great Powers. Faithful to the tradition of diplomatists, which ordains that pleasure shall walk hand in hand with business, and that the one shall lead agreeably to the conclusion of the other, infinite zeal was displayed in varying, as far as possible, the intervals between the daily conferences. On March 23, the day of the signature of the famous Treaty of Paris, which proved to be one of the greatest illusions of Napoleon III's foreign policy, music, dances, and gala nights were started with redoubled energy to celebrate the auspicious event.[1]

Invitations to the Foreign Office were eagerly sought after. Madame Walewska's Wednesdays became the rage. It was unanimously agreed that the minister and his wife were unequalled in arranging fancy-dress and allegorical balls. They set the fashion in these entertainments which for several years turned the heads of that light-hearted

[1] An echo of this universal rejoicing is apparent in a private letter to which we were fortunate enough to have access, written by the Countess de Damrémont to Thouvenel, French ambassador at Constantinople. After describing the illuminations of the city of Paris, the general satisfaction of the people, the street-fêtes organized in response to those of the salons, Marshal Baraguay-d'Hilliers' sister goes into the details of the official functions: "The day after to-morrow, Thursday, the Emperor will return to Mehemet Djamil Bey the compliment paid you by the Sultan in attending your reception. His Majesty is going to a ball at the Turkish Embassy, to which about twelve hundred persons have been invited. To-day the dinner is at Hübner's; to-morrow I do not know where, for since the Congress has been sitting there is rarely a night without a fête or dinner." Then she adds: "We have treated the plenipotentiaries handsomely. What astonishes me is the way they have stood this campaign of forks and bottles."

PRINCESS LISE TROUBETSKOÏ, SISTER OF THE DUCHESS DE MORNY
(From the painting by Winterhalter)

society. History has preserved the memory of one of these, at which Madame Walewska symbolized Cold, in a dress of black lace, her fair hair covered with hoar frost, whilst the Princess Troubetzkoï fluttered through the rooms as a spring butterfly and Mademoiselle Erlanger glowed in flame-colour.

The house extended its hospitality to literature and art. Théophile Gautier, among others, was quite at home there. It pleased the Walewskis to gather at their table the flower of the authors and artists whom they were in the habit of meeting at the Princess Mathilde's. They knew that in blending these choice spirits in an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy, they, too, were penetrated by stimulating influences. These meetings were left to a kind of happy chance. On such occasions the only danger to be feared was a somewhat too careful selection.

"One night," Madame Walewska said to me, "we had Jules Sandeau, Dumas, Gautier, Mérimée, *e tutti quanti* to dinner. You might have thought that with such masters of the art of conversation, the talk would have been a long series of fireworks. Not at all. It was dull and languid from beginning to end. Sandeau relied on Dumas, Dumas waited for Gautier, and Gautier did not feel sufficiently himself among all his distinguished colleagues."

This reminded me of a remark of Madame Octave Feuillet's, who told me how delightful were the select dinners given by Madame Fortoul, wife of the Minister of Public Instruction. Having discovered that when too many wits meet in the same company they extinguish each other, that excellent hostess used to vary her parties with the utmost care, inviting only a dozen carefully assorted guests at a time, and never bringing all the talkers together. Nothing could have been more enjoyable than these invitation gatherings of Madame Fortoul's.

This was the order of the winter evenings. In the warm season the Countess Walewska spent a considerable

part of the spring and summer on her estate at Etioles. Her friends knew the way to her hospitable house. At Etioles, as wherever her steps led her, she entertained the best company; and the fluctuations of politics, alternately extending or diminishing her husband's prestige, caused no reaction in her salon. Her circle of friends followed her, whether Walewski had just resigned his office, or whether he was about to join some new and powerful combination. The Emperor's private secretary, the witty Mocquard,[1] alludes to the fact in a letter written to the Countess immediately after the crisis which drove Walewski and Persigny from their respective offices:—

"DEAR MADAME WALEWSKA,—Your kind letter reminded me of one of our chats in the past. I was pleased to see the procession of artists, authors and diplomatists at Etioles. I doubt whether there were as many at Chamarande,[2] or at the houses of the other outgoing ministers. In the first place there are plenty of ungrateful people in the world. And then—we must do Walewski this justice—he has more of those qualities which win esteem and affection than his colleague. Nevertheless, I did not expect such numerous expressions of gratitude, nor sympathy so openly manifested. They do honour alike to those who gave and those who received them. That part of your letter has done your friend good.

"I have been urging the Emperor to give a reply on the subject of Orx.[3] He still wishes to wait and hear the result of further inquiries instituted on the spot.

"You do well to seek a house. It is not enough, as Walewski says, to pack your trunks; one must have one's

[1] Mocquard was called at the Tuileries the Emperor's *thought* (*la pensée de l'Empéreur*).

[2] The Duc de Persigny's estate.

[3] An estate in the department of the Landes promised by the Imperial generosity to Count Walewski.

cottage ready. All things, however, are relative, and in Paris a cottage, if only moderately suitable, is not so easily found.

"After Vichy—that is to say after August 5—we are going to Saint-Cloud. The Emperor goes to the stud at Pin, returns, and after the 15th goes to the camp at Châlons, then towards the end of the month to Biarritz with the Empress. Amid all these moves it will scarcely be possible for me to see you again, as you will be at the seaside when I am at Montretout.

"The waters this year have proved very beneficial to the Emperor, who contents himself with the baths. Nothing here worth telling you. It is in vain that society is constantly being renewed; it remains very common. Quantity is more noticeable than quality.

"MOCQUART."

In the season when everybody dispersed to the watering-places, Madame Walewska liked to go to Kissingen, a resort quite in the fashion, which in hot weather attracted a large French colony, drawn more particularly from official circles. The place was full of life and stir. The women vied with each other in their elegant toilettes. The public gave to the cure only such free intervals as were left between excursions and parties. Madame Walewska was a prominent figure there in 1866, when Benedetti, recently appointed ambassador to Prussia, wrote this letter to Thouvenel, sketching his stay in Kissingen and the amusements enjoyed there:—

"KISSINGEN, *July* 17.

". . . Here, on my return from Nuremberg, I still found the Walewskis and Countess de la Bédoyère, and I have executed your commission. Count Walewski himself announced to me his appointment as President of the Corps Législatif. He thinks he has a difficult task, but when a man has wrested the recognition of the Empire

from London, and compelled all Europe to undo the work of 1815, he can hardly fail, in the Palais Bourbon, to save it once more from the perils to which it is exposed. Countess Walewska, making light of the impertinences of time, the sole enemy perhaps whom she cannot completely vanquish, still charms by her grace and good humour. She continues to lead, or create, the fashions. She has always—like the rest of the world—her faithful squire; it is your friend, Count Goltz, who plays this rôle at Kissingen. He shows great assiduity, takes the Countess to the springs, arranges excursions and parties, advises her in culinary matters, and preceded her here on purpose to secure her rooms. Yesterday—skilful diplomatist that he is—he brought about a meeting with the Empress of Austria, with the result that the introduction came off in the market-place of Kissingen at the moment when all the foreign colony was gathered there—a triumph indeed, both for the Countess and for Goltz himself."

At other times the Walewskis went to Mont-Dore. In this corner of Auvergne she occupied a villa which in no way resembled a hermitage. Here she invited her friends, and visitors stayed for a week or more. Gounod spent a whole season there, composed his opera *La Reine de Saba*, and dedicated it to his hostess. A shadow was already falling on that brilliant personality. About that time Gounod showed signs of brain trouble. It is known that he nearly lost his reason, that he was in a state bordering on delirium, and that, fearing the worst, he was obliged to submit to special treatment from Dr. Blanche. He recognized perfectly his own alternate attacks of fever and hallucination, and, at the first symptoms, he would either hasten to the famous brain specialist, or else send for one of the doctor's trained attendants, who knew how to look after his health and avert the risk of a worse attack. At Mont-Dore, Madame Walewska, who

had not been warned of this, was much astonished to see a man dressed in black who always followed Gounod as closely as his shadow; dogged his footsteps, and occasionally whispered in his ear. What sort of servant was this who showed himself at once so vigilant and so familiar?

"I am not really inquisitive," she said to her husband, "but I should like to know what there can possibly be in common between the master and his mysterious acolyte."

Walewski then gave her the required information. One morning they were about to take a ride in the neighbourhood. Gounod, delighted at the prospect, entered into the preliminaries with all the gaiety of a child and an artist. Just as every one was mounting, the officious stranger intervened: "*Monsieur Gounod must be careful not to overheat himself. . . . He must not gallop much*," and so on, with a string of similar injunctions.

Long after, Madame Walewska confessed to me she had always greatly feared two kinds of people: those who were beside themselves with drink, and lunatics; therefore it was with a feeling of relief that she had seen the illustrious composer depart.

But to return to the days in Paris.

Fond of gaiety and ready to share in any amusement going, Madame Walewska went much into society, and still merited the nickname given to her by the girls and women of Florence, *la Rieuse*. She was to be seen everywhere. Like Madame de Metternich, she took part in all the entertainments, partly from a sense of duty and partly from pleasure. She never missed either a ball or a reception, and readily agreed when asked to take part in *tableaux vivants*. One afternoon at Compiègne, while Félicien David played the organ behind the stage, she delighted her audience in the principal rôle from *Herculanum*. On all occasions she was gracious and anxious to contribute to the enjoyment of every one. Respecting

this characteristic of hers, Octave Feuillet tells a pleasing little anecdote.

One day Madame Walewska, Princess Anna, the Duchesse de Montebello, Gounod, Admiral Hamelin's son and Feuillet were all taking tea with the Empress, together with the Duke of Athol and three other Scottish chieftains, with bare knees, who had arrived in their national costume from the Highlands. At half-past six, at the entreaty of the novelist, the Empress requested the Duke to send for his piper, who arrived in full dress and played a military march, walking gravely with a martial air backwards and forwards through the room. Meantime, all the company were longing to see the Scotchmen dance their national dance. To induce them to begin, the Empress, Princess Anna, and Madame Walewska did not hesitate to leave their seats and dance with them, a kind of Caledonian reel, like true daughters of Scotland. The ice once broken, the visitors danced alone and gave a very interesting exhibition of their skill.

Madame Walewska was always on the guest-list for Compiègne. One of the first to be invited by the Prince-President, she immediately took her place in the group of beauties, who together with Countess, afterwards Duchesse, de Persigny, the Duchesse de Bassano, Countess Le Hon, the lovely Valentine Haussmann, the equally lovely Madame de Pourtalès, and the Duchesse de Cadore, formed the very kernel of the Court of Napoleon III. At all the autumn gatherings at Compiègne, which were the acme of official luxury and elegance, she was one of the regular guests who formed a circle a little behind the sovereigns, in the famous Imperial box; their varying charms, their magnificent jewels, and the taste and splendour of their toilettes attracting the eyes of the whole house. The exalted position of Count Walewski and the brilliance which it reflected upon her, as well as her per-

BARON HAUSSMANN AND HIS DAUGHTER VALENTINE (MADAME PERNETTI)

sonal attractions and the favour she enjoyed, could not fail to make her a conspicuous figure at Court.

The most brilliant years at Compiègne were those of 1860–1. The recent victories of Magenta and Solferino had regilded the Imperial eagles. On the other hand, the prospect of peace opened up bright horizons. In November, 1860, the Court returned for the hunting season, and the entertainments started with unusual spirit and vigour. Prince Napoleon and Princess Clotilde, whose political destinies, rather than their souls, had just been united in marriage, were the guests of the Emperor, as well as the new Austrian ambassador, Prince Metternich. All eyes were turned to the new arrival, the Princesse de Metternich, who from the beginning had shown her marked originality, her independence of mind, and her distinctive style of dress.

For these illustrious guests the organizers of the Court entertainments redoubled their efforts. Theatricals took on a fresh interest, the choice of the plays and the talents of the artistes being equal to the distinction of the spectators. All listened, watched, and compared, and in the opinion of the best judges, Madame Walewska, in her white satin gown, her priceless pearls in her ears and round her throat, had nothing to fear from the proximity of the Princesse de Metternich, dressed in black tulle and sparkling with diamonds.

2

Foreign guests at the Château de Compiègne—A talk with Bismarck—Visit of Frederick William to the Countess—An amusing mistake: the King of Prussia and "Leroy"—The best page in a minister's portfolio—Betwixt Emperor and Empress—After the 4th of September—Madame Walewska's salon in the Hôtel de Flandre in Brussels—A letter from Thiers—Return to France—Thirty years after.

In the spring of 1862, Bismarck exchanged the embassy at St. Petersburg for that of Paris, where he made but a short stay, although it was long enough to show him the weakness of the French military organization and the indecision, as regards foreign policy, of the ruling power.

He used to enjoy his intercourse with Walewski, for whose firmness and frankness—offering so strong a contrast to the vacillating nature of Napoleon III—he had a very high esteem. When he found the minister engaged in some conference, he would call upon the Countess, with whom he would take a cup of tea and talk over the events of the day, frequently reminding her of their first meeting at Homburg, speaking of many things, and even touching upon political matters. Bismarck chiefly plied her with questions. What was the general opinion in the Emperor's household? What did his advisers really want? What did he want himself? Would he ever cease to swerve from right to left, without forming any firm alliance? What was the object of all these broken threads? She managed to evade his too direct interrogation.

"Countess, in politics nothing should be left unsaid."

"Except the one important thing which must never be

mentioned, and which you, *Monsieur l'ambassadeur*, would never dream of bringing into the conversation!"

"Perhaps not. And that is exactly the thing which you would like to make me say. For you appear to be a clever little diplomatist yourself."

"Am I not in an excellent school?"

In such social skirmishes the Prussian ambassador took a little relaxation from the pursuit of his now ripened plans. But who in France at that time suspected Bismarck of being made of the same stuff as Cavour? Least of all the cleverest men of state, the governors of the nation, who, fatally blind, treated him as a negligible quantity.

In the following year the great event of the season was the visit of King William of Prussia. The German monarch had not, however, undertaken the journey from Berlin to Compiègne solely for the pleasure of partaking in the amusements offered by a court more luxurious, more gallant, and far more light-minded than his own. Important events were imminent, and he was anxious to ascertain on the spot whether Napoleon would act as an ally or an adversary. It was the desire to gain the fullest light on this subject that induced him to take those long strolls in the avenues of the park. With the Emperor, who was so much more mysterious and less lucid than himself, he engaged in conversations which often lasted until late in the morning. These serious conversations and great projects formed an interruption in the succession of visits, hunting parties, or receptions.

William, notwithstanding his military appearance and tastes, was by no means arrogant or abrupt in manner. He did not go through the world with his eyes closed to feminine beauty. It was noticed that he was very assiduous in his attentions to the Empress. Although his masculine admiration for what he used to call "her perfections" was only a secondary reason for his presence at Compiègne, he lavished attentions on her as though in

Platonic and indirect protest against the infidelities of the Emperor. The spectacle of this "*Reiter* playing the Celadon" provoked many sly smiles and mischievous glances, and certainly none of the onlookers credited the visitor with the serious intentions and threatening designs which he was turning over in his mind. The monarch on a visit also owed some courtesy to the wife of the Foreign Minister. It was evident that he paid his debt with a good grace. One of the royal visits to Madame Walewska gave rise to an amusing incident.

It was about eleven o'clock one morning. William, thinking it unnecessary to be accompanied or preceded on his visit, rang at the door of the apartment occupied in the Château of Compiègne by Madame Walewska. It was opened by a young servant, who asked the name of the visitor. "Le Roi" (the King) was the answer. The unsophisticated young woman, who had not sufficient experience to judge the quality of individuals by their air or looks, hastened to inform her mistress that "Monsieur Leroy" wished to see her. Madame Walewska, never suspecting that the German King was in her hall, imagined it was the Court hairdresser, the Léonard of the Second Empire, an artist without a rival in arranging puffs and curls — in a word, Monsieur Leroy. She accordingly sent word that he had chosen an inconvenient time; she could not have her hair dressed then, but would expect him before dinner that evening. The message was faithfully delivered to the King of Prussia, who, not thinking it worth while to explain his identity to the maid, bowed and withdrew. A little later the story was known to every member of the idle, gossiping company; and when Madame Walewska came to lunch she noticed their whispers, suppressed smiles and continuous gaiety. She begged to have the joke explained to her, and then learnt that she had mistaken the Berlin potentate for her hairdresser, and had practically turned him out of her house

under this impression. She made what excuses she could to the King, who only laughed at the episode and promised to make a second visit the following morning, when he would hope for a kinder reception.

But the rôle of Countess Walewska was not confined to shining at parties in her own or her friends' houses. If not gifted with any superior talents, to which, in fact, she made no claim, she had what in women is quite as good: tact, ingratiating affability, knowledge of the world, and that graceful familiarity of manner which is the special characteristic of Italian women and of Florentines in particular. By means of these qualities she was of great assistance to her husband, and completed in the social world his action in official spheres. While he drew up despatches and signed reports with the preoccupied and absorbed air which was natural to him, she in her way seconded the statesman by upholding and maintaining his position. It was said that she was the best page in the portfolio of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Loyal and disinterested, of the utmost integrity, generous-minded and upright, Count Walewski acquired and deserved general esteem. In political circles he was, in fact, more esteemed than beloved. In the Council he sat among his colleagues without any certainty of their attachment to him. He held a place in their circle, but did not feel one with them in heart or mind. Beneath a mask of devotion, Fould was secretly working against him. Persigny, more openly, was doing the same thing.[1] Rouher too, with no liking for his person and still less for the reactionary policy which he represented in Napoleon III's cabinet, never spared him covert criticism.[2]

[1] Persigny, in his *Mémoires*, has, however, done full justice to Walewski's foreign policy, though he considered him too much biased in favour of English views.

[2] When Count Walewski was unexpectedly nominated to preside over the *Corps Législatif* in the place of the Duc de Morny, he wrote to Thouvenel: "I had a curious talk with Walewski on the subject of his appointment.

From the Emperor he constantly encountered opposition, and found it difficult to work in common with him. Some of Walewski's views were entirely opposed to Napoleon's Nationalist principles. Recent events in Italy had not aroused much enthusiasm in him. In common with a few clear-sighted men, he foresaw that Italian unity, once established, would be full of danger for France, and might bring about other and still more perilous unities. In the embassies abroad, as in bureaucratic circles in Paris, it was known that there were two diplomacies—that of the Quai d'Orsay and that of the Emperor's study. Moreover, there was as much discrepancy as to methods as there were differences of ideas between the sovereign and his minister. Walewski always chose the straightest line to attain the object he had in view, declaring that he was following the example of Napoleon I.

Cæsar's nephew—Walewski's first cousin—proceeded, on the contrary, only by circuitous routes, and believed himself, in consequence, a more profound politician. Drouyn de Lhuys and Walewski watched the trend of events. Napoleon III's dreamy mind clung to the illusion that he was the man of Providence, marked out to transform the world by his own empiric ideals. Discord was inevitable. In the early days of 1859, when serious complications were plainly foreseen in Italian affairs, an angry scene took place. Walewski, believing himself secure in the approval of the sovereign, had sent a despatch to the Prince de La Tour d'Auvergne, the representative of France at Turin, which was immediately

He believes himself to be immensely popular, supported both by the Chamber and by the country. He proposes to redress all wrongs and all deviations of policy. He wishes to restrain and limit the debates on the strictest lines, etc. I mean to be very quiet and reserved and to let the impetuous torrent flow. Things will fall naturally into place. It is the peculiarity of such situations to leave no illusions to any one."

See the very interesting *Pages du Second Empire*, by M. L. Thouvenel, drawn from his father's papers, 1903, E. Plon publisher.

THE DUCHESS MARIE DE CADORE

countermanded by secret orders emanating from Mocquart's study. The result was a scene of pure comedy in Cavour's presence.

The Prince de La Tour d'Auvergne, armed with his despatch, communicated it to the great Piedmontese statesman.

"Count Walewski instructs me to make you the following communication."

Then he read his despatch to the Prime Minister, who, when he had listened to the end, replied with a smile—

"Alas! you are quite right, my dear Prince. What Monsieur de Walewski writes to you is, I confess, not intended to encourage our hopes; indeed, he blames us freely. But what would you say if I, for my part, were to read you a communication which has come to me direct from the Tuileries and from a certain personage whom you know?"

Smiling ironically, he drew from his pocket a letter bearing the same date as the despatch from the Quai d'Orsay, in which the Emperor's secretary assured him in confidence that his projects of annexation were regarded favourably and that he need not fear that any complications would ensue.

Walewski complained of this sudden and inexplicable reversal of policy—a course so frequently adopted by Napoleon, who constantly threw out the action of his ministers and upset the measures they had taken.[1] The Emperor, generally the calmest and most phlegmatic

[1] Napoleon III constantly amused himself at this game, which stultified his ministers' actions. Thus, at the time when Benedetti was devoting all his diplomacy to contest the possession of the Hanseatic towns by Prussia, Monsieur de Goltz, King William's minister, had already seen the Emperor, and all had been arranged and conceded. The French ambassador had no course left but to clinch the affair. "My cousin," said Princess Mathilde, "is never so pleased and cheerful as when he has thoroughly shuffled all the cards of his policy. He is such an extraordinary man!"

of masters, showed considerable irritation and expressed it in no measured terms. Walewski, deeply hurt, declared he could no longer retain his office after what he had heard. It was necessary to intervene officially. It was a stormy period in his administration. Twelve days later, on the same subject of Italian affairs, he had actually an altercation at a Cabinet Council with the quarrelsome Jérôme Napoleon. Several times he resigned office, but was persuaded, without much resistance, to return, or exchange with another minister, when the crisis was over. Madame Walewska was often the tactful intermediary who succeeded in restoring harmony after these stormy scenes.

The Tuileries knew so well how to apply the system of compensation! Walewski left office without any apparent diminution of favour. Before appointing him to the presidency of the *Corps Législatif* Napoleon took an opportunity of presenting his wife with a magnificent pearl necklace, while at the same time he gave him a fine country estate to which he added the same honorary distinction he had awarded to Walewski's colleague, the Jewish banker Achille Fould, who was in charge of the Emperor's Civil List. As there was obviously no occasion to fill the pockets of the wealthy financier, the Emperor decorated him and Walewski with the cross of the Legion of Honour in diamonds, hitherto worn only by the Chief of the State and his cousin, Prince Napoleon. This gave rise to an anecdote spiteful enough to run quickly through the town and the salon. The cupidity of Achille Fould was well known; it was also known that the value of the cross in diamonds must be at least fifty thousand francs. The rumour was circulated that Monsieur Fould—now created, it was said, Duke de *Villejuif* (a title which highly amused the Imperial couple)—had immediately turned his cross into three per cents.

The *Moniteur* of January 5, 1860, announced the

Emperor's acceptance of Count Walewski's resignation and the appointment of Thouvenel in his place. As we have stated, however, compensation followed closely upon his apparent disgrace. A decree, also published in the official organ, allotted a pension of a hundred thousand francs to members of the Council leaving office and holding no appointments! Walewski was in this position. He therefore profited by this princely indemnity, retaining at the same time his office as senator, which added thirty thousand francs to his budget. He could afford to wait. The interval was but short. In the month of November, in the same year, the news of the fall of Fould was received with rejoicing at Princess Mathilde's house: "Fould has gone! Fould has left us! At last that is over." He was in fact succeeded in the Ministry by Walewski, whilst the superintendence of the Emperor's household passed into the hands of the Marshal of the Palace, Marshal Vaillant, who held a bewildering plurality of offices.

In all his relations Walewski appeared proud and a little haughty; his colleagues thought him too solemn. The art of making partisans was never his, although he was thoroughly kind at heart. The Countess, polite, obliging, and pleasant, never too self-complacent, nor too obviously conscious of her own advantages, counteracted what was brusque or stiff in the minister's manner, and drew closer the bonds between the deputies of the different groups with a word, a smile, or a kindly attention. Thus she soothed the malcontents, and never wearied of rendering little services to her party.

This conciliatory influence was felt more particularly during her husband's term of office as President of the Senate. She brought together the most conflicting elements. An ex-Minister of the Interior, who judged her rightly, compared her to the duchess in one of Charles de Bernard's novels, who with a glance, or a blow of her

fan, could prevent the Leader of the Opposition from uttering a syllable so long as she wished the Government to stand.

Besides the great parties which she gave at the official residence of the President, she received every day. Her drawing-rooms were never closed to her intimate friends, even on the nights when she went to the Opéra. On her return she would find her faithful guests waiting to take tea with her. She never needed to talk of herself; her personality and its setting sufficed; but she directed her efforts adroitly and delicately to putting every one at ease. She had in a marked degree the gift of pleasing. Her friends, with few exceptions, began by falling in love with her. By a kind of sweet magic, of which she had the secret, she used to win them from passion and convert to friendship the love she could not accept, while leaving to the flower all its perfume and sentiment. Thus she succeeded in retaining all her lovers. Kindness and affability constituted the natural charm with which she won all hearts. People flocked to her, sought her company and conversation, because she spoke with charming simplicity and was also a good listener.

"If only for her smile and her silences," one of her old admirers said to me, "after we had left her, we were ready to believe in her wit."

Count Walewski, who had undertaken the task of developing and forming her mind in the early days of their union, was well satisfied with his wife, and proved it by the confidence he showed in her. Having great influence over her, he made use of her social qualities to safeguard some of his own responsibilities as a man and diplomatist. He was her counsellor, while she sought to be the working bee of his designs. Before going to his study or to the Chamber, or, later in the day, before some great reception, he gave her timely warnings as to her line of conduct, or hints to be dropped:—

"During the country-dance, you will say to the Emperor . . . You must give the Empress to understand . . ." and so on.

She always succeeded in her missions, having achieved the difficult task, says the Countess Stéphanie de la Pagerie, of inspiring both the Emperor and the Empress with a very warm sentiment towards her. The latter also often gave her little missions to carry out. Madame Walewska kept the Empress informed as to Italian affairs, as to the impressions respecting France of those who enjoyed power, temporal and spiritual, in that divided land; and from time to time she received notes couched in this kind of tone:—

"MY DEAR MARIE,—I have just seen the Papal Nuncio. I am very anxious to know what effect my words had on him. Try and find out for me. "EUGÉNIE."

As for the Emperor's feeling for her, there were different ways of looking at it. Those in search of mysteries regarded this as the delicate point and laid considerable stress on it. Some affected to believe in a rivalry of ambitions between Madame Walewska and Madame de Castiglione, according as the two stars glowed or paled. Scandal certainly found some material to work upon. First it was the pearl necklace. Then it was some other incident. Madame Walewska's natural kindliness, and her readiness to help the numerous persons who sought her good offices with the Emperor, formed a certain plausible pretext in the eyes of many men, too sceptical to place any faith in the Platonic character of feminine interference.

With the subtlety of the Florentine mind, described by a Roman pontiff of other times as "the fifth element of the universe," she steered very adroitly between the reefs; but a day came when she felt compelled to see the Empress and request to be left out of her private parties

until this ill-natured gossip should have died down. Eugénie, much touched, embraced her affectionately, and far from accepting the sacrifice, redoubled her affection for her, so that none could fail to perceive it. At one time the women, and even the courtiers, noticed, not without jealousy, that the Empress seemed unable to do without Madame Walewska, that she had her constantly with her, and even took pains to unite her tastes with those of her friend by choosing the same toilettes. To Princess Mathilde, who inquired whether she had kept any of the Prince Imperial's hair, she replied—

"I gave it to Madame Walewska."

She spoke of her or summoned her on every occasion. It is true that after a time the wind changed, and for a few months she showed her a certain coldness. But, like the changes in the weather, these alternations were merely transient, and did not prevent the Countess Walewska from professing her faithful devotion and unchanged regard for the Empress.

Love of truth, however, compels us to add that it was not the same with Eugénie, for in later years the ill-will of others stirred up her former doubts and wrongs, and a definite rupture occurred on the appearance of a series of startling publications, signed Pierre de Lano, in which, rightly or wrongly, her name and authority were quoted. Rumour said that all these tales—placing the Bonapartist circle in a highly unfavourable light—had emanated from Madame Walewska's private papers.

The most prolonged prosperity must end some day. Count Walewski, whose death occurred in 1868, did not see the downfall of the Empire. Madame Walewska had worn her widow's weeds two years when the Emperor—defeated and a captive—wrote her a distracted letter from Germany, beginning:—

"Do you know where the Empress is?"

On September 4 she ordered her carriage, drawn by the pair of piebald horses so familiar to the eyes of all Imperialist Paris, and with her children, her maid, and her butler made her way to the Gare du Nord to take the train for Brussels.

Here she found herself by no means alone. Many of the old *habitués* of the Tuileries had taken refuge in the same town. Before many days had passed the fugitives had discovered each other. Thus by a curious and significant change of fortune, after the republican 4th of September, the emigrants of fallen Bonapartism found themselves once more united in Brussels, the city whose hospitality is invariably accorded to those who have been defeated in politics, and in which eighteen years earlier the exiles of December 2 had taken shelter from the storm.

She stayed at the Hôtel de Flandre, occupying the entire first floor of the house. Her salon became the head-quarters and meeting-place of the party. Of the Emperor's late advisers, Marshal MacMahon's wife, his mother the Duchesse de Castries, his sister the Countess de Beaumont, the Duc d'Albufera, Marshal Canrobert's wife, General de Montebello, and General Fleury, all met there of an afternoon; and whilst the fate of the fallen dynasty was at hand these adherents exchanged hopes, watched the direction of the wind, and planned the possibility of a return to the Tuileries.

General Changarnier was another of these afternoon callers. Although he expressed the most ardent Legitimist views, much was expected from him; he was to be the Monk of the party, the rebuilder of the throne of the Cæsars. Republicans of new and vague opinions slipped in with the rest. The Minister Plenipotentiary of France, accredited to Brussels by the Government of National Defence, formerly deputy for the Upper Rhine province, and later a *déclassé* both in politics and life (his name was Taschard) was not afraid to make his way to her salon,

nor even to be an assiduous caller. He once chanced—so he told me thirty years later—to meet Gambetta on the threshold of the Hôtel de Flandre. In a voice betraying more amusement than reproach—

"What are you doing under the roof of this enchantress?" he inquired.

The days slipped by, bringing no change in the political situation. To the exile they seemed long and dull. She yearned to know once more the air and the life of Paris, which, more even than her native city, more than Florence, now but a remote memory, seemed the true land of her affections. But in Paris, as throughout France, there was a violent reaction against those who had been closely connected with the Imperial suite. Ill-natured reports constantly introduced her name and personality into the Bonapartist plots to regain the control of events. Must she resign herself to voluntary exile until the anger and bitterness which had recoiled on her head had subsided, and she could safely put an end to this painful period of waiting? She hesitated to return to France, much as she wished to do so and necessary as it was for her interests, because in the crash all her fortune had been lost. Thiers, now President of the French Republic, was faithful to the ties of old friendship, which had survived the death of Walewski, and found time to write her these lines of consolation:—

"PALACE OF VERSAILLES, 1872.

"MADAME,—I beg a thousand pardons for not having answered your letter before, and trust you have not imputed my silence either to carelessness, or to forgetfulness of my friendship for Count Walewski, but rather to the crushing weight of business laid upon my shoulders. I assure you this is the real truth, and that I have been unable to perform those duties of friendship which I have most at heart.

"I seize a moment to-day to tell you that there was

never any need for you to justify yourself in my eyes of any charges of intrigue or conspiracy brought against you, and that I have always looked on you as a person of sense, of tact or good understanding, and, above all, as a loyal Frenchwoman. Therefore the gates of France are always open to you, and for my part I should see you return without the least anxiety.

"As for your children, I shall be delighted to be of use to them whenever possible, and will certainly try to prolong as far as I can your son's residence in Europe.

"I beg you to believe in my very sincere affection and in my loyalty to the friendship which always existed between Count Walewski and myself. Accept this assurance of my most respectful homage. "THIERS."

The following week saw Madame Walewska back in Paris, and her first visit was to the friend and protector of her family, whom she found not at the Palace of Versailles, but in the family mansion on the Place Saint-Georges, rebuilt on the site of an older house. She was shown in and met with a kind greeting. Thiers reminded her of his great affection for the late minister. Then, with his characteristic mobility of ideas, inquired—

"What do they say about us in Brussels?"

"They do not like your Republic," she replied a little clumsily, for she had not yet grown used to the new order of things. "Your nearest neighbours fear lest the stain will increase daily and spread to them in time. But you yourself, President, do you believe in the durability of your new structure? Are you not perhaps preparing the way for the House of Orléans?"

"Oh," replied Thiers, touching her shoulder lightly with his finger, "you are still very young. The Orléanists! What are you thinking of? A royal family who on the very morrow of the siege, after the unprecedented disasters which had befallen France, after the enormous indemnity

which cost the nation her very life blood, began by demanding its property, its estates, its millions! They have lost the game in France once and for ever."

In returning to the soil of Paris, which had so recently been washed by the deluge of events, Madame Walewska never took up again the threads of her old life nor her former brilliant relations. Her world had been broken up and scattered, and with it had gone her pecuniary resources. Neither in nor out of power had Count Walewski sought either fortune or the kind of business by which it may be made. Naturally he lived in luxury and splendour. Holding the double office of senator and minister of state, and having, moreover, received from the Imperial hand a magnificent property valued at something like a million francs, he spent without counting the emoluments and revenues of his exceptional situation. He died almost poor. The Countess shared his tastes and his liberality. Through all their princely journeyings, in her magnificent receptions, her hand was ever open and prodigal to those around her. Now she found herself compelled to examine her position and to think of the future. President Grévy awarded her a pension of fifteen thousand francs in consideration of the public services rendered to the country by Count Walewski as ambassador and statesman. She became Comtesse d'Alessandro by a second marriage.

In the simple surroundings in which we have since been privileged to see and know her, memories of the golden glow and poetic elegance of the past often revisit her. They bring no bitterness with them. After a youth of triumph and a long morning of unclouded sunshine, prolonged into the evening of life, the whirlwind that swept over her has left her calm and self-possessed; in her dignified retirement she preserves intact the gracious indulgence and kindliness which are an integral part of her nature. Remote from men and events, in her

MADAME DE PASKÉWITCH

isolation of thought, which gradually deepens as death removes one after another of her contemporaries, the past returns to her lucid and distinct. In talking of these bygone days, she speaks with a precision, neatness, and justice of expression, as though the details had occurred that moment, or at most the day before. In recounting her reminiscences, she chooses some subtle feature, some kindly or witty speech, some piquant situation, leaving aside everything else. Even her souvenirs are in admirable taste.

Her attachment to the personalities of the past does not prevent her following with great interest the developments of contemporary politics, and striving to read the prognostications of the future. She reasons with sagacity as to the divisions of a party which was formerly dear to her, but whose destiny she believes to be finally accomplished.

"I know, of course," she said to me, "that we must leave something to the unexpected, which so frequently gives us a dramatic surprise and upsets the wisest calculations. But does the quality of the men permit us to presuppose such an accident as possible? I find it hard to believe."

She has not forgotten any of the personalities which once passed across her horizon. She speaks of them impartially, without malice or prejudice, with frankness and precision. Her opinion of Morny, of Fialin de Persigny, are worth remembering. She never shared the popular infatuation for the former of these great actors, agreeing in this respect with Princess Mathilde, who from time to time allowed her feelings to escape her. I have heard Madame Walewska exclaim, "Morny! They talk only of Morny! One would think there was but one man, one head, one character—always Morny! He worked the *Coup d'Etat;* that is conceded. He was very successful with women, so they say, and I am willing to believe

it. He was distinction itself; I do not question the fact. What I am sure of is that he left twelve millions, carefully invested, to his children. Everything else — the things which did not belong to him, but to others, to France, for instance—weighed about as much with him as a grain of tobacco; while, on the other hand, Walewski went out of office with empty hands, concealing nothing in his portfolio."

She has amused herself with jotting down her souvenirs —mere scattered notes—on loose sheets of paper. Perhaps some day they may be given to the world as leaves detached from her life. Meanwhile we are permitted to anticipate the future by offering to the public this sincere and accurate impression.

CHAPTER VII

THE EMPRESS'S CIRCLE

Recapitulation — Stendhal's prophecy — The Montijos in Paris — Hunting parties at Fontainebleau—The Emperor makes up his mind—A little tale hitherto unknown: at the Duc de Morny's—Official announcements—Ten years of pleasure—Sketch of the Empress, physical and moral—In private life—Trivial revelations by the ladies of the palace—Eugénie's character in contrast to Clotilde's—Anecdotes—Virtues and fascinations—An incipient and sentimental flirtation—A romantic episode not generally known —How the Empress became interested in politics—She begins to intervene in the councils of state—Her growing influence—Disputes with the Emperor—High treason—The Empress's active rôle in the latter years of the reign and its consequences—Afterwards—What may be expected from future revelations.

IT was in February, 1905. Men's minds were occupied with philosophical reflections in consequence of the striking contrast, under exceptionally solemn and sad circumstances, presented by the meeting of two women, both of a great age and bearing the same great name.

Each had played on the world's stage the most envied of parts, but especially she who had survived the loss of her power, glory, and sovereign fortunes. The one who was just closing her life's day was known as Princess Mathilde; the other who leaned over her bed to say the last long farewell was the Empress Eugénie.

A tide of recollections flowed back again around this woman who had been the object of such contradictory sentiments of hatred and of adulation, so exalted in her hour of youthful triumph, and afterwards so long enveloped in oblivion, indifference, or pity, whom history once more begins to take into account.

About 1834, Stendhal had dangled on his knee a very pretty child, born beneath the sky of Granada, whose mischievous grace pleased his eye. With that twist of bitterness which always disfigured his smile, the sceptic and philosopher said to her: "When you are grown up you will marry the Marquis de Santa-Cruz, and I shall trouble no more about you."

Eugénie de Guzman, second daughter of Duke Cypriano, Count de Téba, Marquis d'Ardalès, Grandee of Spain, and of Maria Manuela de Kirkpatrick y Grivegnée, Countess de Téba and later de Montijo, might well have aspired to that rank. There were glorious records in the annals of the house to which she belonged; she had learnt with her alphabet, how among her ancestors she numbered such men as Alphonse Perez de Guzman, the hero whose feats are still remembered by the Andalusian peasants, Gonzalès de Cordova, surnamed the Great Captain, and Antoine de Leve, the most capable of the generals of Charles V.

The señorita, however, was not destined to become a Santa-Cruz. A more astonishing fate was reserved for her. On the very day of her birth, as her first feeble cry mingled with the roar of an earthquake which was shaking Granada to its very foundations and making itself felt in distant regions, a mysterious sign, appearing above the infant's head, announced that it is not necessary to be born a princess in order to become more than a queen.

The child had grown since Stendhal and Mérimée—particularly Mérimée—frequent visitors at her mother's house, had fascinated Eugénie and her sister Pacca, the Duchesse d'Albe, by the wonderful stories in which they gave play to their fancies. She had also travelled since those days, and had tested her weapons of conquest in various centres of Europe.

The Montijo family, whose pedigree was complicated

by a coat-of-arms comprising Spanish,[1] Scottish and French quarterings, had both traditions and connexions in Paris. There was a distant relationship between them and the family of de Lesseps. This was not forgotten in Royalist circles when the Montijos came to settle in the French capital. The friends of the Duc de La Rochefoucauld must have well remembered seeing the beautiful Spanish lady at the *fêtes-champêtres*, given by the great nobleman at his estate of La Vallée-aux-Loups.

It did not take long for Madame de Montijo and her two daughters to make a sensation in a world to which the fact of their being foreigners, and their somewhat showy ways, were an added attraction. The Countess, who had not gone through life without arousing some passions,[2] had transmitted to her two daughters the regular beauty of her features. She was considered a very attractive woman, possessing by nature the suavity so characteristic of the women of her country.[3] But Eugénie de Montijo was distinguished at first sight, wherever she went, by a charm which was peculiar to herself. The timbre of her voice, her style, her manner, which was not without a dash of singularity, all served to attract attention. Her fame spread to high quarters.

The discriminating eyes of Louis Napoleon fell upon her for the first time at a reception given by his handsome cousin. "Mathilde, who is this?" he asked, catching sight

[1] The Empress Eugénie was always very proud of her Spanish lineage.

[2] In 1852 we read the following note from the pen of Viel-Castel: "Mademoiselle de Montijo, a young, fair-haired Spaniard of high birth, has, since the journey to Fontainebleau, been the object of the Prince's attentions. . . . What will my brother Louis say to this, he who was once her mother's lover and is still her friend?"

[3] The sovereign rank, to which by an extraordinary chance her daughter was so soon raised, made no change in her manners; she showed neither greater pride nor arrogance. Whether from her own personal wish, or because the Emperor intentionally prevented her from acquiring influence, the Countess de Montijo never filled at court the position to which she might reasonably have aspired. It was said that the reason of this was her marked preference for the Duchesse d'Albe, her elder daughter.

of this stranger who formed the centre of a lively circle. "A new-comer, a young lady of Andalusian descent, Mademoiselle de Montijo." "Indeed, you must introduce her to me." He took considerable notice of her at table, and gossip relates that very shortly afterwards he called upon her in the handsome apartments, 12 Place Vendôme, where she lived with her mother, that he proved young and urgent, and received the reply: "Prince, after the marriage." But what are such stories worth?

Mademoiselle de Montijo, invited to the hunting parties at Fontainebleau, became, as was clearly evident, the object of the attentions of the Prince-President, soon to be Napoleon III. He fell hopelessly in love with her as he watched her graceful movements on horseback, and it is probable that her equestrian skill lost nothing from her secret wish to captivate the Prince. History shows us that many royal favourites have owed their promotion to opportunities provided by the chase, in which, as graceful and alluring Amazons, they have come prominently before the notice of the monarch. Daring riding, graceful apparitions flitting to and fro under the greenwood tree—how wonderfully all this enhances the impression of that beauty which charms and subjugates.

It was thus that Madame de Pompadour sallied forth triumphantly to meet the King in the forest of Sénart, the favourite hunting-ground of royalty, wearing the most tempting of costumes and armed with a fan on which a rival of Massé's had, it is said, painted Henri IV at the feet of Gabrielle. She passed and repassed, amid horses and hounds and all the King's retinue, like another Diana the Enchantress, sometimes dressed in blue and driving a rose-pink phaeton, sometimes in a rose-pink costume driving a phaeton of azure-blue. As she had calculated, the King noticed her, inquired about her, and ultimately chose her.

Eugénie de Montijo employed less artifice, and had in

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

view a more legitimate and more complete victory; she took prompt advantage of the background which the hunting parties of Fontainebleau and Compiègne provided for her beauty.

It was soon evident that the Emperor was paying court to the brilliant horsewoman. Among the Emperor's suite and the gossips of the capital it soon became a burning question whether Mademoiselle de Montijo would yield to an amorous caprice, or whether, in her own future interests, she would be clever enough to offer a virtuous and politic resistance. Very rarely have the prying spirits of a court, combined with feminine jealousy, found such excellent material to work upon.

Louis Napoleon had no thought of marrying her. But circumstances led him to do so.[1]

From time to time he had cherished the idea, so flattering to his vanity, of contracting a royal alliance. French diplomacy had been very active in the embassies of Vienna, Munich, and elsewhere, in quest of a princess of the blood. Everywhere his overtures had been coldly received, even when, as a last resource, there had been some question of a union with the daughter of a prince without a crown and without subjects: Prince Vasa, the deposed heir to the throne of Sweden, an exiled monarch who for a long time past had wandered homeless through the hotels of Europe. All his mysterious campaigns, however, had brought him only polite excuses. The reigning families of Europe appeared with one accord to have laid him under a sort of matrimonial ban.

[1] The secret diplomacy of the chief of the State, then only Prince-President, had in the first instance been directed towards Spain. The Duke of Rianzarès, who was in constant communication with the new occupant of the Tuileries, undertook to negotiate a marriage between Louis Napoleon and the Infanta Marie Christine, sixth child and fourth daughter of Don Francis de Paule, and consequently sister of the husband of Queen Isabella II. She was then scarcely seventeen years of age, and was said to be rather plain and only moderately rich. No official request for her hand was ever made, and Spain was never called upon to decide one way or the other. The Infanta Marie Christine married in 1860 Sebastian, Infant of Spain.

Irritated by the thinly disguised disdain and the ill-dissimulated hostility he encountered, Napoleon, finding his calculations again upset, and being moreover in love, finally made up his mind. A name was suddenly circulated, arousing immense surprise on all sides. A love match at that stage of his power! Was such a thing possible outside the fairy tales and romances?

At first society was sceptical, not knowing how to take the matter. This is evident from the following, hitherto unknown, incident. A few days before the Emperor's intentions were publicly announced, a suite of rooms was made ready by his orders for Madame de Montijo and her daughters in the Elysée Palace. This gave rise to much gossip, as may be supposed; nothing definite was known, however, therefore society had only its conjectures to go upon, and scandal-mongers were, as it proved, wide of the mark. Morny, however, who knew the formal intentions of his brother and master, the Emperor, wished to forestall events by giving a dinner in honour of the future sovereign.

All the women of the Court circle were present. Madame Walewska, whose husband, as French ambassador in London, had been instructed to feel his way towards a princely alliance abroad, to which circumstances had once appeared favourable, was also amongst the guests, having been forewarned of the surprise in store. Most of the other ladies were in ignorance, and looked scornful when they learnt that the guests of honour were only Mademoiselle de Montijo and her mother. The two ladies shortly entered the room. Morny went to receive them with a deferential eagerness which raised a good deal of secret comment. Madame Fortoul, wife of the Minister of Public Instruction, exchanged shocked glances with Madame Ducos, wife of the Minister of Marine, who was afterwards so anxious for the honour of acting as foster-mother to the Prince Imperial. Eugénie had arrived

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE
(From the Collection of A. M. Broadley, Esq.)

beautifully dressed, and bore herself with grace, unaffectedness and irreproachable self-possession. Madame Walewska, who was not the wife of a diplomatist in vain, glided towards the lady and whispered in her ear: "I congratulate you, Madame, on the destiny which awaits you." The rest of the company remained silently watching the foreign guest with an air of offended surprise. The comedy was delightful for those who were in the secret.

Failing the Infanta, whom he had not been able to secure, Napoleon III took Mademoiselle de Montijo by the hand and clothed her in the purple. On May 30, 1855, he wedded this descendant of the Guzmans at Notre Dame, with all the religious pomp, splendour and display of banners, with which royalty can dazzle and delight the crowd.

As soon as the series of official receptions and public appearances had permitted thousands of eyes to endorse the choice of the Emperor with respect to the bride's beauty, the world had to confess that his taste had not led him astray. Although not in the first bloom of her youth, Eugénie de Montijo had all its brilliance and freshness. The delicate harmony and distinction of her well-proportioned person left no ground for criticism, however ill-intentioned and adverse. The delicacy of her cameo-like profile, not as yet noticeably blurred by the slight over-fullness of the cheeks,[1] compelled the admiration of all; while it was impossible not to admire the exquisite detail of her features as a whole: the blue eyes—whose soft depths gave no hint of the hardness they could assume—her charming small mouth, her transparently delicate skin, her brilliant complexion, and her hair, neither fair nor red nor auburn, but of a tint—assisted by a mysterious

[1] The oval of her face was not wholly perfect, the lines were not graduated towards the chin so clearly as might have been wished; the profile was faultless.

artifice—which was unlike any other. Some might have fancied the beauty of her bust a little impaired by the shortness of her waist, a peculiarity common in Spanish women; but the perfection of her arms and shoulders more than atoned for this defect. Every eye that rested on her expressed admiring approval.

That was an incomparable period of her life. One entertainment succeeded another; an interminable series, of which each one seemed to be the apotheosis. Her journey through the western Departments was one long triumph. In her dress of pale blue tulle shot with silver threads she fascinated and won all spectators. She had a winning way of saluting the cheering crowds, enveloping them with her soft, bright glance as she bowed right and left. On July 13, 1859, the Empress and the Prince Imperial drove from the Tuileries to Notre Dame for the Te Deum, in commemoration of the victory of Solferino. Their carriage, filled with bouquets presented by the National Guard and the troops, advanced upon a flower-strewn road. The ovation on their return excelled even that of their arrival.

Did she not discover in the happiest way how to make herself almost popular? Her generosity was universally extolled. The public lauded the sacrifice she had made on the day after her marriage, when the city of Paris offered her a magnificent pearl necklace; she declined the gift, asking that its value might be distributed among the poor of Paris—a sacrifice both easy and opportune, since shortly after the Emperor gave her a similar necklace of the value of a million francs! The official Press never wearied of praising the activity displayed by the Empress in founding new philanthropic institutions, and her zeal in the establishment of *crèches*, asylums, workshops, relief funds, convalescent homes, and refuges of every kind; personally organizing and inspecting all these branches of

social charity and urging those around her to imitate her example.

This was the ransom paid to popular feeling for the festivities she enjoyed all the year round.

In her most radiant days she loved to surround herself with pretty faces, just as she enjoyed donning fresh jewels to set off her court dresses. The intangible charm of her personal grace (even those who did not love her could not deny her this quality) was enhanced by the contrasts of this select assembly, that multiple reflection of her elegance her ripening youth, and her prestige. What had she to fear from comparison? Her face left nothing to desire the mobile expression of her long eyes, generally veiled and languid, the classic beauty of her throat, bust and shoulders rising from draperies of tulle or muslin as from a cloud, and the willowy grace of her walk won for her all suffrages, especially when in the early days of her triumph, before she was quite sure of herself, she still bore her honours with modesty.

Her manner to those whom it pleased her to single out for attention at her evening parties was extremely gracious; and when receiving at Compiègne, she followed the example of the Emperor by ascertaining beforehand the talents, position, and reputation, in fact the leading characteristics, of any guest newly admitted to her presence. Occasionally she confused the nature and titles of their works, whence resulted some amusing mistakes.[1] Oppert, the Academician, recounting to me the details of his stay at Compiègne, drew upon his marvellous memory for several typical examples. But, generally speaking, she entertained with great tact and courtesy. There was a certain charm in her way of discussing art.

[1] This is what occurred to Sainte-Beuve on the sole occasion when he had the honour of a conversation with Napoleon III. "I always read you in the *Moniteur*," the sovereign assured him, with the best intention of saying something pleasant. Unfortunately for two or three years past the "Nouveaux Lundis" had been appearing in the *Constitutionnel*.

She did not shine by spontaneity, nor had she great facility in repartee. Occasionally she was so absent-minded that her wits seemed to have deserted her. A Florentine lady, the Marquise de Piccolelli, once gave me an instance of this, the sole responsibility for which rests with her. Eugénie, having gone to Naples to get rid of a sore throat which had almost deprived her of her voice, accepted the hospitality of the magnificent villa of Pausilippa. In order to amuse the illustrious guest, her hosts sent out invitations, and parties were organized for conversation and cards. Neapolitan society was full of curiosity to see the beautiful Empress and to hear the brilliant conversation with which popular rumour credited her. One afternoon the weather changed, and rain fell heavily over the city, veiling the view of the lovely bay. "I do wish," said the Empress suddenly, as if just waking from a dream, "that some one would explain to me why it always rains on the sea when it rains on land." Those around her glanced at each other, a little surprised at the simplicity of the remark. But, as we have said, such sayings could only have been the result of absent-mindedness. When in voice and spirits, she talked far better. Sometimes she even made a very smart remark. I will merely quote one to compensate for the ingenuous speech already related.

Prince Henry de Reuss, special envoy from Prussia to France, quickly acquired popularity in Parisian society by his pleasant manners, his wit, vivacity and cheerful temper, while with the Emperor and Empress he became a great favourite. One afternoon their Majesties honoured this representative of Prussian diplomacy with a call, and Eugénie expressed a wish to visit the rest of his rooms. The ambassador, in obedience to her request, led her through the drawing-rooms, the state and official apartments, until they came to the bedroom. Here he quickened his steps, but the Empress stopped at the

The Empress Eugénie

From a Portrait by Winterhalter

bedside and said, with a smile, "Ah! c'est ici la place d'armes."

Her temper was as uncertain as her mind was variable. Her attitude to her ladies-in-waiting was not exempt from caprice and inconsistency. Fits of jealousy, explicable enough, frequently disturbed her intimate life. The Emperor's fleeting preferences would sometimes cause her to take a dislike to the recipient. Yet she made much of many pretty women whom ill-natured persons pronounced to be her rivals, such as Mesdames de La Bédoyère, de Cadore and Walewska, to whom all eyes were turned. In her relations with her ladies-in-waiting,[1] who, under the direction of the Princess d'Essling, mistress of the household, fulfilled in turn their agreeable daily service, the Countess de la Poèze, a faithful friend of her late mistress the Empress, declares that Eugénie showed a kindly frankness which rendered their offices comparatively easy. If she thought it her duty to complain of negligence, or of a detail which had been wrongly reported to her, she would say: "You should not have said or done this." The lady in question would reply with the same directness and offer her explanation. The matter, once cleared up, was never reopened. In this respect the Empress was the opposite of the cold and somewhat repellent Clotilde, who was exceedingly reserved by nature. On similar occasions she never raised her voice, but merely dropped her eyes, pursed her lips, and said no more. This, as one of her ladies-in-waiting remarked to me, was the most unbearable line of conduct. She would maintain this obstinate silence for hours, and leaning back in a corner of her carriage, behind the slow-trotting horses, would vouchsafe neither look nor word to the lady beside her. Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre

[1] The Countess de La Tour-Maubourg, Viscountess Aguado, Baroness de Malaret, Madame de Sancy-Parabère, Countesses Lezay-Marnesia and de la Poèze.

spent many a tedious hour in the company of the Princess, while Her Imperial Highness steadily counted the beads of her rosary, more for the sake of holding her companion aloof than with the intention of saying her prayers. It may be said in excuse that Prince Napoleon laid himself open to serious reproach for his infidelities and evident neglect of Princesse Clotilde. But it is certain that the company of the serious, circumspect and pious Italian was considerably less stimulating than that of the charming Countess de Canizy.

"It was enough to discourage virtue!" exclaimed one of the Empress's ladies-in-waiting, who, with her high spirits and hasty temper, found herself ill at ease in the icy atmosphere which surrounded the Princess Clotilde; for in speech and in practice the Princess was a Jansenist.

We were speaking of virtue. The Empress's position enjoined upon her the need of keeping within strict bounds; moreover, her temperament made the duty an easy one. How was this known? No matter! The fact remains that she had no exhausting struggles with herself. It might be added that in her palace, a house of glass in which not a movement, not the smallest passing mark of preference, could escape the notice of the many eyes to which she was exposed, she would have risked too much had she been other than what all the women who lived near her declared her to be—impeccable. At no time of her life did her conduct give the smallest justification for the Emperor's gallantries.

An Empress is none the less a woman. Every feminine being, to quote a poet, finds in her cradle the fan of Célimène. Eugénie was one of the most virtuous of all the great ladies of her Court; but she allowed herself the pleasure of fascinating and firing some of the hearts she met on her way. Chance, caprice, the attraction of the moment, she was not wholly indifferent to such passing thrills. At times she went to the verge of imprudence.

Once at Fontainebleau, in the spring of 1860, she had an adventure which was furtively commented upon for at least a week. The Empress took it into her head to attend a village fête in disguise; her attendants, also in disguise, fell foul of a gallant who proved somewhat too demonstrative to the Empress. The incident gave rise to considerable criticism. It was considered neither wise nor becoming for her Majesty to play the part of the Caliph in the *Arabian Nights*. In her own circle she need not fear such adventures when she donned her mask at the fancy-dress dances. On such occasions it pleased her to lay aside her state and indulge in the innocent familiarities of a flirtation. She carried away pleasant and harmless impressions, agreeable remembrances, little secrets shared with another, almost without his knowledge. A charming story of this kind was once related to me. It has the colour of a romantic episode.

The domino could only imperfectly conceal the personalities of the Emperor or the Empress from the *habitués* of the Tuileries, the latter especially was easily recognizable by her walk and other characteristic features. On the occasion in question, the ball was not given at the residence of the sovereigns, but at the Duke de Morny's. Amongst the guests of the President of the Chamber was a special friend of the Duke's, a gentleman whose Legitimist principles cut him off from the Court. This did not, however, prevent him from being one of the fashionable world in Paris. He occupied a very prominent place among the select "lions" of society. The women were captivated by his good looks, which lay less in the regularity of his features than in his expression. They liked him too for the unfailing attentions he paid them, discreet, marked, or gallant, as the occasion might warrant; for his alternately submissive and commanding manner, in public or in private; for the contrasting gentleness and abruptness of his nature, which was sometimes tender and sometimes

intensely passionate. He certainly deserved the partiality of women by the spirited co-operation he gave to any scheme that promised to amuse them. At balls and parties he had won the reputation of being most captivating, a precious quality which brought him agreeable returns. He possessed to perfection the art of arousing curiosity.

On this particular evening he exercised all his wiles upon a very charming woman, whose exquisite figure, together with the grace and nobility of her movements, had immediately attracted his attention. He foresaw a spice of something unusual in this adventure and redoubled his ardour. During the evening he never left her side, and she was not unwilling to listen. He became more and more urgent, tried sentiment and then passion, until at last the Empress became embarrassed and almost anxious. She managed to escape from him. He lost sight of her for a time, but devoted himself to the chase. At last, glancing into a side room, he found her sitting with the Duchesse de Bassano.

He glided towards her and whispered in her ear: "I shall not leave you again; if to-night I may not see the pretty face hidden by that detestable piece of velvet, at least let me know your name." He returned to the attack with even greater animation than before. She evaded his curiosity and parried his questions. Who was she? Why would she not permit him to know her identity? "You still refuse? Very well. I shall find out. They will soon be calling your carriage. I shall be on the spot, and if I have not caught the word I long to hear, I shall run as fast as your horses and reach your door at the same time as yourself. After that I shall have no difficulty in finding out your secret." A little uneasy at his pertinacity, and at the same time interested in spite of herself, the Empress considered for a moment. "If your heart is not sincere in its declaration, I need not trouble. Indulge

your caprice. If, on the contrary, I may believe in the feelings you have expressed, I will ask you not to seek to surprise my secret. In exchange for your word I promise to accede to any desire you may express, provided it is reasonable." "What can I desire but a meeting?" "A meeting! Ah! that is not so simple a matter. Still, you shall have one, though not at my own house. You see that domino who is making signs to me to end this conversation? That is my husband who is getting impatient and wants to leave. Adieu. You shall see me to-morrow at three o'clock, in the Bois de Boulogne, near the lake. I shall be in an open landau, and I will pass my handkerchief twice across my lips, so that you may be quite sure it is myself."

Next day, at the appointed hour, the Marquis de C—— paced up and down the avenue, his heart beating high with hope. Whilst he was thinking about this unknown woman, and building up a love story round her in his mind, there came a sudden stir among the crowd. Every one stood still. Outriders appeared, announcing that the equipage of the Empress was approaching. He immediately uncovered before the sovereign, before the woman who was driving slowly past. Was he dreaming? What was his surprise to see her twice pass her handkerchief gently across her mouth, according to the signal given last night! Then it must have been the Empress!

A few minutes passed. Before he had recovered from his stupefaction, the equerry on duty for the day, who happened to be the Baron de Bourgoing, left his place and came towards him.

"Monsieur," said he, "Her Majesty asks on what day you would like to be invited to the Tuileries."

"Her Majesty's kind intention and the honour she does me fill me with gratitude. I will take the liberty of thanking her by letter, which will reach her to-morrow."

"Oh, but letters do not reach the hand of the Empress

so quickly or easily. It would be better for me to take back a verbal answer to Her Majesty."

"Allow me to do as I have said, and be so good as to present to Her Majesty my respectful homage."

The Marquis de C—— knew that on the following day his friend, Madame de Sancy-Parabère, would be on duty at the Tuileries as lady-in-waiting. Accordingly he wrote the promised letter and placed it in the hands of Madame de Sancy, telling her that the Empress was expecting it. To accept so tempting an invitation, he wrote, would be to satisfy the dearest wish of his eyes; but to obey this impulse would be to lose her good opinion, since it would mean the denial of all those principles which she knew him to hold. He begged permission to decline the temptation. The Empress's kindliness was not checked by this answer. She was pleased to resume their intimate conversation on various other occasions when they met again at the Duke de Morny's. She even went further. She did not scruple to honour the man of the world, the man who had for a moment touched her heart or her fancy, with a kind of public recognition. This occurred at the Fontainebleau races. Leaving her suite behind her, she advanced towards him and exchanged a few words with the loyal and uncompromising Monarchist. This caused a mild political scandal in the Imperial suite. To leave her seat and almost descend to meet a literary man who had never been seen at the Tuileries was surely to exceed the limits of caprice. The surprise caused by her action spread beyond her immediate circle. Why? Who was he? What had he done? None could understand the reasons for a sympathy the real cause of which was hidden even from him who had inspired it.

But to turn from these anecdotes to more important matters.

The Imperial star shone with undimmed lustre for about ten years. That was the Golden Age of the Second

PACCA DE MONTIJO, DUCHESS D'ALBE

Empire, the climax of its prosperity, the honeymoon of financial speculation, a period without parallel for those who were able to enjoy unbroken success and live in cheerful security. Foreigners flocked to Paris, bringing their wealth in exchange for the enjoyment they found there. They traversed with dazzled eyes this splendid Parisian life, which seemed a fairy vision of luxury and pleasure, an alluring and seductive falsehood. Meanwhile the Empress was more than ever overwhelmed with homage and adulation. It now became evident that she herself was losing her head on these heights of success to which a marvellously favourable destiny had raised her. Her somewhat heedless nature had now become uncertain and capricious. Her natural mobility of temperament now carried her, from moment to moment, to extremes of opinion and feeling which were more and more felt by those around her. Her inconsequence in conversation was somewhat maliciously observed, for she had aroused a spirit of criticism.[1]

She was all-powerful at the Tuileries, and took advantage of the fact. Nervous and hasty by nature, never particularly accessible to reason, impulsive and consequently open to the most intemperate as well as to the noblest outbursts of feeling, she now kept those around her in a state of constant uneasiness, especially her phlegmatic husband, who went in fear of her sudden desires for domination and government.

This stormy interference in affairs of state had not come to a head quite suddenly, however. For many years a lingering remnant of feminine timidity had kept

[1] And what bitter criticisms came from her ill-wishers! One of these, writing in 1860, believed himself to be expressing the opinion of the majority: "I find it hard," he says, "to analyse the character of this woman, and I cannot see at what she is aiming. Her affection for the Emperor has its root in ambition; her maternal love appears to me very doubtful; and under no circumstances does she act in a way calculated to conciliate the affection of the French."

Eugénie aloof from the burning field of politics. The Emperor had been careful to exclude her from this sphere and she had never sought to enter it. A variety of causes, mostly of a private nature, such as the ill-disguised jealousy of the Bonaparte family, her own differences with the Emperor, whose conjugal backslidings were scarcely concealed, either at Court or at the ministerial receptions, and a fresh perception of the realities of her position, all contributed to reveal to her the emptiness of her private life. She took a kind of moral revenge by showing that she could rise above the details of dress and domesticity, and take her part in the serious business of life, advising, organizing, and even intriguing in politics. She acquired the habit so thoroughly that she could never be induced to give it up.

She succeeded, thanks to a turbulent—and in the judgment of some a quarrelsome—temper in acquiring a real political influence, which greatly increased after her regency in 1865. She intervened, if not in the councils of the ministers, at least by keeping herself informed of the questions treated therein. The ministers got into the way of calling upon her. They kept her in touch with affairs. She rebuked them freely and gave her opinion. Her judgment was formed on the confidential information given to her, but it was complicated by her personal prejudices and preconceived notions, against which the Emperor had to contend.

The hottest of these extra-official encounters occurred towards the end of 1867 and is worth relating. It was, as we have said, during the last years of the Empire. The exhibition had closed its doors and the foreign sovereigns had packed their trunks.[1] There was a vague uneasiness in the air, while rumours and alarms were awakened, the

[1] Twelve emperors and kings, six reigning princes, one viceroy, nine heirs apparent, to say nothing of a number of highnesses, had been guests in Paris since the spring. These statistics delighted the panegyrists of the dynasty.

forerunners of weighty events at home and abroad. The extreme parties were very active. There were signs which indicated to those far-sighted enough to interpret them that the political arena was preparing for transformations and the entry of new actors. The Emperor was ill and undecided, wavering between generous resolutions and a return to arbitrary measures without firmness. The Empress, now less engrossed by the social dissipations which had occupied the earlier years of her reign, took an increasingly active part in questions of state. She discussed them with the ministers and the Emperor, and made known her desires—often mere impulses—even when she could not carry them out.

At that moment Italy, impatient to regain possession of Rome, still under the temporal sovereignty of the Pope, was urgently demanding the withdrawal of the French troops left to guarantee the sovereignty of the pontiffs. Eugénie, on the other hand, a devoted daughter of the Church who desired to see her husband justify his title of Most Christian King, was strongly in favour of maintaining the French contingent for the protection of the Roman States. Two powerful auxiliaries, Metternich and his wife, seconded her views, and did not hesitate to support them in the French Cabinet.[1] A line of conduct had to

[1] In the autumn of 1862 Prince Richard Metternich wrote the following interesting letter to one of the *habitués* of the Tuileries, in which he leaves no doubt as to his opinions being in accordance with those of the Empress:—

"CASTLE OF KÖNIGSWART,
"*September* 27, 1862.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—A friend of mine writes me that you are uneasy at the attempt made by the extreme party to bring about new concessions as regards the Roman question. I can assure you that since my last interview with the Emperor and Empress at Saint-Cloud, I cannot believe that party has the remotest chance of success. The words I heard from the Emperor's own mouth are so explicit and so just that I am convinced (only deeds could shake my conviction) that the *status quo* will be maintained at Rome so long as the French army cannot be honourably withdrawn from the Eternal City. You know how glad I am to be able to testify to the way in which the Emperor has ever kept his promises and

be chosen and a decision made. Napoleon III called a Cabinet Council to consider the question, and fearing, not without some reason, lest the Empress should endeavour to influence their deliberations by appearing in person, gave orders that the meeting should be kept secret from her.

But the matter so carefully concealed was already known to her; and, acting on the first impulse of her fiery Spanish temperament, boiling over with anger, she flew rather than walked to the council chamber. A sentry had been placed at the door with orders to allow no one to pass. He opposed the entrance of the impetuous sovereign.

"I wish to enter, stand back!" she cried angrily.

Finding himself in a horrible quandary between the orders he had received and his fear of hurting his Empress, the guardsman, between his gallantry to her sex and his fidelity to the word of command, fell at the feet of Eugénie with his bayonet laid across the doorway.

"Majesty, no one may pass, by order of the Emperor."

"We shall see!"

And without more ado, she leaped over the sentry's bayonet, burst open the door, and entered the council chamber with the violence of a whirlwind. The Emperor was presiding, grave and imperturbable, he alone having his head covered in the presence of his respectful and attentive ministers. But the sovereign failed to impose respect on his angry wife, who saw in him only the man and the husband. Going straight up to him, with a backhanded blow she knocked off his hat, then without a word withdrew as she had entered, leaving the ministers dumb with surprise and consternation. Knowing the secret weakness of Napoleon, she was not content with this, but determined to carry out her own conjugal *coup*

assurances given to me. Therefore I am persuaded that while safeguarding the interests of Italy, the Emperor will not yield on the essentials of the question. This is the conviction of her who for me, as for many people, embodies the dignity of France and the loyalty of the dynasty. Do not forget me, and remember me also to T. M." "METTERNICH."

d'état. Dashing up to her own apartments, she ordered preparations to be made for her instant departure, and fled from the palace in a common cab, accompanied only by one of her ladies-in-waiting. She went to England, hoping soon to be recalled and to make her own terms as the price of her return.

What was to be done? How was this strange action to be explained to the public? Measures had to be taken at once. Amongst the Empress's suite was one lady who bore some resemblance to her mistress in figure and movement. She was placed with all ceremony in one of the state carriages and driven to the Gare du Nord, while the rumour was industriously spread abroad that the Empress of the French had gone to visit her dear friend, Queen Victoria. By the same train, a member of the diplomatic corps was sent to the Empress to represent to her the serious consequences involved in such an adventure. She had already had time to reflect. The British sovereign did not approve of her action; on the contrary, having learnt the reason for her inopportune journey, she had given a cold reception to the Empress, to whom she generally showed every mark of sincere affection. The beautiful, fugitive Princess had no course open to her but to return furtively to the Tuileries and the conjugal apartments. History does not say on what terms the reconciliation was effected.

In any case, the occasional discords between the Emperor and Empress rarely arose from political causes. More personal motives compelled her to raise her voice in protest. She could not endure without indignation her husband's fickleness and widespread gallantries. Napoleon, who was evasive with men and weak with women, was sincerely attached to the companion he had married for love — failing her he had selected for ambition; Napoleon, who was tender in private, and whose trick of pronouncing his wife's name without sounding the first

letter delighted all the ladies-in-waiting, and Madame Carette in particular, cherished his wife, but also his peace of mind — and dreaded nothing so much as the fits of jealousy or offended dignity which he so constantly brought upon himself. One who was well acquainted with the palace made the following remark :—

"The Emperor, you see, has such a horror of any fuss in his home that he would be capable of setting fire to the four corners of Europe in order to ward off a single one of those family quarrels which are brought about by his infidelities."

"Set fire to the four corners of Europe!" What an excellent escape from the domestic annoyances of a crowned head, particularly for his subjects, who have to take the risks and pay the costs!

Yet these scenes and quarrels did not prevent the existence of a very real and lasting attachment, especially on the Emperor's side. There were frequent intervals of tender intimacy and reciprocal affection. They were sometimes seen walking side by side in some quiet path of the Bois de Boulogne, smiling at their recollections, their thoughts and their present serenity.

Unfortunately, as the Emperor's health declined and his malady, while weakening his body, gradually sapped his moral energies also, the Empress's ascendency grew stronger, bolder, and more dangerous. There were now two parties in the Cabinet: that of the Emperor and that of the Empress; the one prudent and cautious, the other aggressive and combative. There is no doubt that Eugénie urged the extreme resolutions which rendered the war between France and Germany inevitable.[1] She foresaw with anxiety the moment when the Prince Imperial would

[1] "I am compelled to recognize that the Empress was, if not the only, at least the principal author of the war of 1870. . . . She realized that she had been mistaken when, in 1866, she prevented the Emperor from accepting by a bold initiative the offers made to him by Bismarck at Biarritz. She desired to repair this mistake. . . . She desperately urged on the war, and

Deroche. Photo

The Empress Eugénie

be called to succeed his father upon a weakened and unstable throne. Internally, the empire, now become parliamentary, showed such long-suffering as astonished even the opponents of the Government. The hands which held the reins were clearly growing weaker. A successful war, such as she saw in imagination, might be the salvation of the dynasty, and listening only to her own desires, she pictured a campaign as glorious as that of the Crimea and as short as that waged against Austria. She did not provoke hostilities, but her ardour and impulses were not calculated to check them. On the contrary, her ideas were now predominant. Her influence was sufficient to bring about a change in the original dispositions made in the event of war, as to the part to be played by Napoleon III, and the distribution of the army corps.

It is impossible to postpone the inevitable. Only a few months had passed since an arbitrary Empire had given place to a liberal regime. The nation hoped for its permanent duration. And this Second Napoleonic monarchy, which originated from a *coup de force*, and trusted to be legitimatized by an illusion of heredity, was crumbling into ruins beneath the weight of an unparalleled disaster; bequeathing to the Third Republic not only the scourge of a foreign occupation, but the melancholy perspective of ruin and dismemberment.

Since the fatal 15th of July, and the declaration of war, France had suffered an unbroken series of defeats. The tempest of revolution scattered the remains of the Imperial regime. On the morning of September 4, Prince Metternich and the Chevalier Nigra induced the Empress to leave Paris. What a departure! She was forced to flee almost alone, on the arm of a dentist. During the

her influence was considerable. She had practically unlimited power over the Emperor. She dominated less by her charms than by *the memory of the frequent occasions on which he had slighted them.*"—*Souvenirs* of General du Barrail.

night of the 3rd, her faithful friends had taken the precaution of placing in safety some portion of the sovereign's most precious souvenirs, and to confide her jewels to trusty keeping.[1] Cases of superb pearls and diamonds she could not keep, which had to be sold, to sparkle henceforth across the ocean, not on the brows of queens or princesses, but on those of American ladies enjoying a more incontestable power: the sovereignty of wealth.

The Empress reached England without great difficulty and went to Camden Place, the Chislehurst estate which had been prepared long before by an eccentric Englishman named Shode, who had foreseen the arrival of these ill-starred guests before the catastrophe.

"Notwithstanding appearances," he used to say with conviction, "the Emperor Napoleon will be ultimately dethroned, or will grow tired of reigning over France. When that day comes he will repair to England and will live here."

From Camden Place she kept up an active correspondence, following all the fluctuations of the tragedy which was being enacted, weighing events, keeping track of public sentiment, noting the prospects of a return to power, and showing, moreover, sincere grief at the misfortunes of the French nation. "If I were at the Tuileries," her letters seem to insinuate, "I would do this or that."[2] But she was no longer at the Tuileries.

[1] See the chapter on Madame de Pourtalès.

[2] Thus in the following letter, written and signed by her own hand:—

"November 9, 1870. Camden Place:—Alas! each day brings fresh grief; and I am almost in despair, seeing no hope on the horizon for our poor country. To-day, it is said, the negotiations for the armistice have been broken off; I confess I regret this, although, as far as we are concerned, the meeting of an Assembly could but be the knell of our hopes, for they would certainly under the circumstances vote for our overthrow.

"But I am dominated by my desire to see the country make peace, which is now absolutely indispensable, even from the point of view of the future. I get letters from all quarters telling me that the defeat and disorganization are complete. I fear, too, lest the conditions of peace will be made harder

After a few hours of prostration, the idea of an Imperial restoration entirely possessed her. A vague Bonapartist plot was sketched out. The vote of banishment passed by the National Assembly, and the accession of Thiers to power, completely upset this plan.

We will pass over the events which succeeded the death of Napoleon III: the premature reading of his will, the unhappy family discords, the bitter recriminations of Prince Jérôme, and the Empress's assumption of absolute control over the material and moral existence of the Prince Imperial.

The sense of authority which caused her to regret the change from the oppressive Constitution of 1852 did not desert her in exile, nor in her private life and surroundings. As a wife she had never disguised her dominating tendencies. As a mother, guardian[1] and adviser, she governed the enthusiastic and independent nature of the Prince with dryness of heart and ruled him almost to the verge of constraint. And this was one of the principal reasons which induced him to undertake the expedition

because of their efforts! What is one to think and do in the face of such a system of deceit which has lured the country on to ruin? I feel sad indeed, and have hardly courage to hope! General Changarnier behaved splendidly at Metz, and there is only one opinion on that point.

"*If I were at the Tuileries* I should not hesitate to write and tell him how superb his attitude appears to me. But as matters are, I dare not do so, lest my action should be misinterpreted.

"If you see L——, try to make him understand how much more advantageous it would be for Germany not to insist on a cession of territory, which could only entail war after war. Otherwise I think they must realize they have undertaken a difficult task; but conquerors never pause; that is how they fall.

"EUGÉNIE."

[1] Only with the utmost difficulty could the Empress be prevailed on to give up the money which the young Louis Napoleon needed for his personal expenses. Ibrahim, son of Ibraham Pacha, who attended the Military College at Woolwich, and was a fellow-student of the Prince Imperial and the youth of the British aristocracy, told an Italian marchioness, who in her turn repeated the tale to me, that the heir of the Napoleons could not take part in any of the entertainments or banquets organized at the college by the students for want of the money which he must have subscribed to the common fund.

to Zululand. For he was led to take that fatal decision by something more than a desire to distinguish himself by some brilliant exploits to be killed in the African bush. Kept in too severe—and in some respects an impolitic—tulelage, could it have been foreseen that he would be compelled to seek liberty in those distant regions where the assegai of a Zulu was destined to cut short his dream?[1]

Such is fate! The Prince's death broke the last springs of the Empress's activity. Her part was indeed played out.

Of late years she has been seen several times, clad in deep mourning, paying private and furtive visits to Paris, the capital through which in days gone by she drove in her splendid equipages, through a whirlwind of entertainments, reviews and ringing acclamations. Her visits are the outcome of circumstances; but she likes to linger and stir up her memories, as she stirs the dust with the tortoise-shell cane which now supports her failing footsteps.

It is a characteristic obsession that haunts her. Every time she chooses the same halting-place for her flying visits, and I might also say the same centre of observation. She always elects to lodge opposite the garden of the Tuileries, which was formerly her own, in order to tread once more those gravelled walks where stood the palace which she animated with her life and luxury, the ruins of which have now vanished like her own beauty—long since destroyed by time and tears. But, alas! her walks therein

[1] What curious contrasts of names, circumstances, and events! He who hoped one day to be called Napoleon IV embarked at Southampton for the Cape of Good Hope, the colony that England, which had imprisoned his great-uncle, had taken from his grandfather Louis, then King of Holland. In the British uniform he went to fight and reduce to obedience for England the little country of the Zulus, whose liberty and welfare, as one of his biographers has remarked, had formerly been confided to the care of his own ancestors.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES (QUEEN ALEXANDRA)

are not always undisturbed. One spring day the ex-Empress, alone in the crowd, wandered among the flower-beds on which the Imperial palace once looked down. What memories, what nostalgia, must have haunted the Empress now fallen on evil days! Suddenly she, who had reigned over this place by right of rank and beauty, stooped and gathered a humble flower from the municipal beds. Instantly an old keeper, moustached and white-bearded, wearing on his breast the Crimean medal, descended upon her with a surly: "It is against the rules to pick the flowers!" The times had indeed changed!

The respect due to age and great misfortune has thrown a reflection of majesty upon the declining years of this Imperial figure. In time to come, when the hour of historical judgment has arrived, many important documents, now jealously withheld, will stand forth as apologies or indictments, as individual defences or condemnations of her who has been a strange power in the world.[1]

[1] At one time there was a question of the Empress writing her own memoirs. There was no foundation for the report. But it is certain that some of the most important documents concerning the principal personages of the Second Empire are in her possession, and that she will leave plenty of material behind her to take the place of such an autobiography. She always had a weakness for keeping letters and scraps of paper, such as acquire inestimable value in time to come, pinned together from day to day. There will be no lack of pens to write all that she has been unable to set down herself, and to tell us what was asserted or denied in her immediate circle. There will be documents to elucidate the circumstances of her marriage, political papers in abundance, special references to the disastrous Mexican expedition, and many, alas! catalogued by the widow of the man who was defeated at Sedan, in the well-filled portfolio relating to the war of 1870, the responsibility for which she has vainly attempted to fix elsewhere.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THREE SISTERS LA ROCHELAMBERT

Portrait of Madame de La Bédoyère, Princesse de la Moskowa—At Court and in society—A saying of Madame de Metternich—An amusing story—Sad ending to a happy day—Countess de La Poèze—A lesson to the chroniclers of yesterday and to-day—The last morning on duty of a lady-in-waiting at the Tuileries—Madame de Valon—Exceptional importance of her salon after the war—How she "discovered" Pouyer-Quertier—A social adjunct to the office of the Minister of Finance—The personal charm of Madame de Valon—The usefulness of wit, heart and imagination to a woman of the world—The Countess de Valon's claim on posterity.

THE Marquis de La Rochelambert, Gentleman of the Bedchamber to King Charles X, and afterwards senator of the Empire, was a nobleman of lofty mien and rare distinction of mind.

Three daughters graced his home. Brought up partly abroad, in their mother's native land,[1] they soon acquired the tone of court life and of a cosmopolitan society. The names of the three La Rochelambert sisters took a good place on the invitation lists of the best society in Berlin. All three were destined to occupy brilliant positions in the world.

One of them, before being known as Princesse de la Moskowa, was Countess de la Bédoyère. Another, the youngest, bore the less historic name of Countess de La Poèze. The eldest became Madame de Valon, a zealous Royalist.

[1] She was a de Bruges of Berlin, a family of French origin which migrated to Prussia in consequence of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, but remained always French. One of the Counts de Bruges was Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honour.

When the second Imperial venture had established itself for a reign of eighteen years, and a dispersed aristocracy —or at least a part of it—was endeavouring to rally its forces, the new party in power sought to make friends in useful quarters and to form a Court. Overtures and compliments were exchanged, and the head of the family of La Rochelambert hesitated to join the new powers just long enough for the necessary preliminaries to be gone through. Two of his daughters could boast of having been chosen, with an interval of some few years between, to serve as ladies-in-waiting to the Empress. Madame de Valon, wife of a deputy of Corrèze, alone held herself aloof and never appeared at the Tuileries.

"We stand firm," she said to a friend of her childhood, the incorruptible Guy de Charnacé.

In this respect she followed the traditions of her mother, a woman of strong aristocratic tendencies, united to extreme simplicity of manner, who took no interest or part in political matters.

The gentle, fair-haired Madame de La Bédoyère enjoyed a full measure of the success which usually falls to feminine charms. Love-letters hovered, like butterflies, about her pretty head. Wherever she appeared she encountered only flattering glances, which embraced her prettily rounded figure, her delicate features, the pure outline of her mouth and the pearly teeth she displayed so freely. For she had a ready laugh, and I have been told that its studied effect could be heard at some distance. She was essentially an evening, a ballroom, flower. By daylight her complexion was somewhat colourless and washed out. At night, however, when the stars of the drawing-room begin to light up, everything about her became vivid without artificial aid; the cornflower blue of her eyes and the rose tints of her cheek deepened their hues. Her beauty seemed to awaken, and she began to live and breathe. Such is the mysterious creature which by day lies apparently in-

animate, but opens at night its emerald eyes and iridescent wings.

"When Madame de La Bédoyère appears, it is as though a lustre had suddenly been lighted," said Madame de Metternich.[1]

Although she spoke both German and English, and, like her sisters, had been carefully educated, she had but little real culture. She had more external attraction than depth of understanding, and more gentleness and goodness of heart than intellectual gifts.

"I do not believe," said one of her intimate friends, "that she ever made a joke, and I am not sure that she was very quick to grasp those made by others in her presence."

We must believe, therefore, that the sparkling conversation of which Madame Carette and Madame de La Pagerie both speak was an amiable fiction, existing only in their souvenirs. She was natural and ingenuous, qualities at which she aimed with a sort of coquetry; but otherwise she made no pretence at brilliant conversation.

The only story ever told of her is of a double slip which was amusing enough. It occurred at one of the Compiègne receptions. Madame Rouher had just made her first appearance, and was hardly known to any one present: an exceedingly agreeable woman, piquant in appearance, but small and so dark! The curiosity of Madame de La Bédoyère being aroused, she turned to the minister, her nearest neighbour, and asked—

"Who is the little black prune?"

Monsieur Rouher smiled and bowed.

"Madame, that is my wife."

She made her apology and withdrew, vexed, but amused at her thoughtlessness, which she proceeded to relate to various other guests.

"I have just had a very disagreeable adventure," she

[1] This remark was quoted to me by her sister, the Countess de La Poèze.

THE MARCHIONESS LABÉDOYÈRE, DUCHESS DE LA MOSKOVA

said. "I was talking to Monsieur Rouher, when I noticed a little dark woman—there she is, sitting over there. Without thinking, I exclaimed, 'Who is that little black prune?'"

"And I had the honour to reply, 'Madame, it is my wife.'" A voice behind her finished the story. It was Rouher, who had been compelled for the second time to listen to the unfortunate remark. She got out of it as best she could; the compliment was obviously doubtful. But a crueller thing was once said of Mademoiselle Mars, when she made her first appearance in public.

"She is like a dried prune."[1]

In her leisure hours Madame de La Bédoyère was a skilful musician. Her manner in talking was very attractive and affable and her gestures graceful, although with a touch of affectation. She was pleasant company, and welcome everywhere. The Emperor showed some affection for her. She was still at an age to enjoy the pleasures of life, when nature seemed bent upon taking a cruel revenge for the favours bestowed upon her in her earlier years. A terrible complaint ruined the charm of her face, dimmed her brilliant colouring, and made her features puffy and distorted. Towards the end, even her gentle and plaintive voice was affected by the dropsy, so that it became scarcely audible. Yet her second husband, General Edgar Ney, Prince de la Moskowa, who loved her dearly, was so blinded by his devotion that he never perceived the extent of the ruin wrought by her complaint. A veil of illusion prevented him from distinguishing the present from the past, and the gallant gentleman would say, with artless and touching conviction, as he gazed on his wife: "How beautiful Clotilde still is!"

The brown eyes and slim figure of the Countess de La Poèze attracted less admiration than the seductive charms

[1] This could not have been said of Madame Rouher.

of her sister, Madame de La Bédoyère. A cheerful nature, good temper, gaiety and liveliness, combined with excellent judgment and many good qualities, were some compensation for the lack of the one irresistible and all-conquering gift. In one of the Countess's drawing-rooms I was lucky enough to see two contemporary portraits, taken in her best days at the Tuileries. One, by Mademoiselle Jacquemart, a carefully painted picture, is cold in expression; the other, a pastel in strawberry and cream tints by an unknown artist—Béguin, I think—is more smiling and agreeable. Both give the same impression: interesting, but not striking; pleasing, but not dazzling.

Called to be lady-in-waiting to the Empress, Madame de La Poèze was able to observe the Imperial life both in intimacy and in its outward show. She accompanied her sovereign on most of her journeys, to Corsica, Egypt, and Venice, and treasured these memories, jotting down details in her albums which are not without a flavour of their own. Moreover, she relates things agreeably. It happens that she sometimes reverts to these notes, if only to prove the fantastic imagination of the historians and the elastic conscience of the journalists. In those days there was no regular Press service: the system of mobilising reporters on every official journey had not been thought of. It followed, naturally, that the chroniclers of the day did much as they pleased with the facts, and added what local colour they liked. Amongst other events thus treated in the press was an expedition made by the sovereigns in Corsica. A journalist on the staff of the *Figaro*, who had a special talent for that kind of thing, had worked himself up to write an imaginary description, in his best style, of the country of "vendettas." He made excellent use of a walk through a forest, highly colouring the picture and making it extremely effective.

"But there was not a word of truth in any of it," Madame de La Poèze said to him on her return.

"Oh, of course," replied the reporter (a future prefect), "if you want to take the bread out of our mouths!"

Madame de La Poèze has remained attached heart and soul to the Empress. The slightest criticism hurts her feelings, and a breath of censure is like a personal injury; she admits no faults in her heroine, and would have her appear blameless in history. She almost goes so far as to hold Thiers and his Government responsible for the war of 1870. Madame de La Poèze was the last to leave the Tuileries, where she was on duty as lady-in-waiting on September 4. She remained with Eugénie in the last supreme hour, and could easily add her revelations to all that has been already told of that drama and of the principal characters in it. But she has never shown herself very expansive on the subject.

"I do not care to talk," she said, "and still less to write of the princes I have served."

She is, in fact, one of those discreet friends who throw a pious shade over their memories and defend them hotly against the indiscreet light. Yet is it of any use to close the shutters? We cannot prevent a subtle, impalpable ray from finding its way in!

Madame de Valon sought notoriety as little as her sisters.

Few women of the world, however, were better entitled to the favour of the public. She seems to have been the most original and the most interesting member of her family—essentially the flower of the La Rochelamberts. Almost as a child she won the attention of the foreign colony in Berlin. She was only seventeen when, passing through Dresden, she appeared in all her striking beauty on the famous terrace of Brühl, to the admiring eyes of the young Saxon officers. Married in France, to a clever and influential man, who, although occupying no high official position, was able to surround his wife with luxury and

elegance, it was not long before she was received into the highest society, for which she was eminently fitted. Her entertainments, both in Paris at her apartment in the Rue de Miromesnil, and also in her country houses, were keenly appreciated by her guests; in Normandy particularly, she welcomed her friends like a queen receiving, without state, deputations of her loyal vassals.[1]

A court gave her pleasure, but she wanted something more. She had a salon in which politics and the social spirit were happily blended. Her house acquired considerable importance, especially after the war of 1870, when it became a centre and meeting-place for the friends and colleagues of Thiers. More than one weighty decision involving the future welfare of the nation was formed in Madame de Valon's drawing-room, after the catastrophe which so nearly ruined the resources as well as the military prestige of France. She it was who in those troublous times pushed to the front the man whom the country needed, the strong calculator, the confident and untiring minister who was able to weigh these resources against an enormous and crushing debt. She discovered Pouyer-Quertier.

This had taken place several years before. The Count and Countess de Valon were in the habit of spending a long season in Normandy. One of their country neighbours was a great manufacturer and a mill-owner, whom circumstances brought to the Château de Rozay.[2] Madame de Valon, with her usual penetration and breadth of mind, was not long in perceiving the future possibilities of such a man as Pouyer-Quertier. Hitherto the whole of his energy and initiative had been concentrated on his own business. Madame de Valon opened

[1] She preserved her beauty till late in life; only her figure lost some of its grace.

[2] We may add that the Count de Valon had him for colleague on the council for the Department of Eure.

to him a sphere of new interests, in which his ideas, projects, and ambitions found fresh scope. Under the influence of that intelligent woman, his superior personality introduced a new and striking feature into her salon, where formerly the amiable, but superficial, Prefect of the Eure, Janvier de la Motte, or another neighbour, the distinguished Monsieur de Vatimesnil, son of the former Minister of Justice under Charles X, had been the two principal figures. During the war, an illustrious guest visited the Château de Rozay, a French officer who, passing as Robert Le Fort, was no other than the Duc de Chartres, then on his way to join his regiment and share the misfortunes of his country. An impressive episode was this journey across country of a Royal Prince of France, upon whose head the Prussians had set a price. But Madame de Valon had herself performed an act of valour and self-sacrifice in sending her two sons to join the army. On another occasion she did not fear to fling herself upon the Prussian guns, in order to save the lives of two men from Rozay who had been condemned to be shot.

Meantime events followed their fatal course.

Peace like a pale star arose at length upon the days of mourning. The Count and Countess de Valon returned to the Rue Saint Florentin in Paris; and, in the general disorganization of the public administration, Pouyer-Quertier, who under the Presidency of Thiers had become the principal instrument in reconstituting the budget of France, established himself in the home of his friend, Léon de Valon. There he worked and received.

He used to return late to Paris from the Chamber of Deputies, then sitting at Versailles. To meet his convenience, Madame de Valon put off her dinner-hour till half-past eight. At this time, when so many political men were kept away from their homes in the same way, the seven o'clock dinner was gradually postponed till half-past,

a fact worth noting as marking a new departure in the habits of our social life.

Amongst those whom Pouyer-Quertier met frequently at Madame de Valon's house was a literary man, very popular with his hosts, Guy de Charnacé. A warm friendship sprang up between the fervent Royalist and the Republican. When the course of events (and what events!) had brought the latter into power, one of his first thoughts was to offer his friend an important post at his side. Charnacé, who dreaded any ties or functions that might interfere with his independent opinions, and who never attempted to lead others, lest he should be led in turn, accepted the honour and the labour of assisting his friend, but refused all titles and emoluments. A rare instance in the annals of officialdom! During a brief period, in which men and money moved with extraordinary rapidity, Monsieur de Charnacé's unpretentious and unofficial office became a ministry on a small scale, to which many offers of service were made, mostly secret and interested. Pouyer-Quertier placed in his friend's hands their financial and political relations with the entire Parisian Press. He was therefore in a good position to observe and appreciate the astonishing initiative and capacity for work of this man, to whom had been entrusted the liquidation of the war indemnity and the readjustment of the national finances. "The man was a Colossus," said the Marquis de Charnacé to me, "both physically and mentally. But to accomplish this task he required all the forces of his Herculean constitution."

Pouyer-Quertier often went late at night to the ministry, where he allowed himself a few moments' sleep. His valet had orders to call him at six o'clock. Sometimes, worn out with fatigue, the statesman could not be roused from his torpor. The man tried in vain. His voice, subdued by fear and respect, was inaudible. Meanwhile, in obedience to the directions of the minister, Monsieur de Charnacé

had made several important appointments for him between the hours of seven and eight. It would be impossible to dismiss these people, who came to receive their instructions, without an interview. It was important to the Government to have their adherence and to induce them to speak and write in accordance with a definite line of policy.

Charnacé would go in and shake the sleeper by the arm.

"Pouyer, you must get up, my friend."

The wretched minister would half open his eyes.

"Dreadful! terrible!" he would murmur.

"Alas! yes, but it is a quarter past seven."

"Very well. Give me five minutes."

Then he would disappear into his dressing-room, where his morning tub awaited him. The plunge into cold water braced him. He felt all his faculties return. His servant helped him into his clothes and tied his necktie for him, then he was ready to give his callers a hearing. They were shown in, three or four at a time. A word to a journalist. An urgent counsel to a director. Then came the lords of finance, a Rothschild, a Soubeyran. At ten, his sole attendant would appear at the study door.

"Monsieur le Ministre, the German Ambassador." The interview would last a few minutes. Then Pouyer would find himself free, not to take a rest, but to start immediately for Versailles. His spirited horses would take him thither at a reckless rate of speed. On the way he generally stopped at the "Petit Vatel" for a hasty lunch. Shortly afterwards the National Assembly would open its sitting; then followed his speech and formidable rows of figures to be dealt with and explained. At last, still feverish from the loss of energy expended in parliament, he would once more enter his carriage and drive back to Paris at the same break-neck pace, to dine at Madame de Valon's and begin work again in preparation for tomorrow's effort. Such was the hourly existence of a

Minister of Finance during the first, difficult period of the Third Republic.

Madame de Valon's salon became by force of circumstances a kind of political club in which diplomatic and financial measures of the highest importance were prepared. Monsieur de Saint-Vallier went there occasionally, either to ask her valuable intercession with General Manteuffel, who formerly as a lieutenant frequented the salon Golowskine,[1] or to confer with Pouyer-Quertier as to some reply to be made to Bismarck, then lord and master of the Château de Compiègne. Those who held the threads of contemporary policy, whether at home or abroad, all flocked to her house. Amongst them was Oliphant, the powerful English journalist, predecessor of Blowitz. He had been introduced to the clever Countess by a colleague in Paris, who was also a friend of the house. Touched by her influence, and actuated by his own sympathies, Oliphant imparted to his correspondence in *The Times* a note of goodwill as regards France which was not in accordance with the habitual tone of this paper.

At Madame de Valon's house they not only talked, but acted, or at least prepared for action. She herself attended the sittings of the Assembly, when it seemed advisable to put in an appearance, either to hear or to support Monsieur Pouyer-Quertier in the struggle; especially later, when he was out of office and nursing his prospects of a return to power.

On one occasion, early in 1874, she was present during a stormy scene. Pouyer-Quertier occupied his place in the right centre and led a vigorous attack upon the Government which had been guilty of replacing the ministry to which he belonged. Suddenly his ardour cooled; the orator beat a retreat under the very eyes of the clever Countess. In vain an active correspondence by means of

[1] The Countess de Golowskine, Madame de Valon's grandmother, who had married a Count de Bruges.

signs and laconic notes had been exchanged between the visitors' gallery and his seat. Other influences had weakened his determination and extinguished his fire. On the following day the statesman and friend had explanations to give and excuses to urge for the apparent weakness imposed on him by party obligations. A few days later he justified himself in the following curious and hitherto unpublished letter to the Marquis de Charnacé :—

"*February* 28, 1874.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Alas! the campaign did not end as I had hoped. I had everything well in hand; the Chamber was with me; we were sure of a majority in advance.

"But I was so hampered and so hard pressed by my friends, who were alarmed at the success we had obtained against the Government and at the consequent rejoicing of the left, that I beat a retreat. When Buffet suspended the vote for half an hour I gave way.

"Our excellent friend, the Countess, is exasperated with me. I must do her the justice to admit that she never ceased writing to me throughout the sitting: 'Stand firm, they are making a fool of you.'

"Alas! I listened to the party considerations which were put forward around me, and helped the Government out of the pit in which they were beginning to flounder.

"Unquestionably, our majority was a certainty. But we should have had to appoint a new ministry at once. It would not have been difficult, of course, to find one stronger and more solid. . . . But we stopped half-way; and now I must make make my peace with the Countess.

"POUYER-QUERTIER."

Politics, as we may see, were rarely lost sight of in Madame de Valon's salon. But this did not detract from the distinction of her receptions, which always upheld their

traditions of exquisite refinement. Monsieur de Valon, who had some appreciable social qualities, seconded his wife's success. She perfectly understood her duties as hostess. Recognizing at a glance the special idiosyncrasy of her guests, she always found the right word to say to each, and exhibited impartially a politeness blended with interest. She had no rival in the art of conveying to the latest comer the impression that he enjoyed the greatest favour of the mistress of the house.

She was not free from the coquetry, common to all popular women, of wishing immediately to annex those she met for the first time. She would fix her mind and attentions upon them; they must become her adherents on the spot. From the moment of introduction she marked out her course, and never rested until she had entirely subjugated a new acquaintance.

Occasionally she mistook the intellectual character of her guests, as on that evening when she congratulated Aurélien Scholl—who had as yet written none—on the passionate interest of his novels, and received a reply from the sharp-tongued writer to the effect that his literary factory was not at the corner of the quays. Never mind! She was quick to turn aside such awkward mistakes, and soon recovered her ground. She read much, wrote less and not particularly well; such of her letters as we have been fortunate enough to see are not remarkable for style. She did not pretend to go deeply into any subject, but her shrewdness saved her from the usual fragility of feminine opinions.

A woman's happiness does not, as generally supposed, consist in loving and being loved, but in continually shining and pleasing. Madame de Valon had some lasting and solid claims on the affection of her friends. She had no lack of imagination. She had a certain coquetry of heart as well as of manner. At least, this has been insinuated, for many were curious to read her inmost heart. I may

go so far as to say that the public have ascribed to her three sentiments; and I use the word in its purer meaning.

This was long ago. She then had fair curly hair, very soft blue eyes, and a pretty smiling mouth. The officers of the German army were eager to make her acquaintance. One of French extraction, Count de Perponcher, considered the handsomest man at the Court of the King of Prussia, nearly won her heart. She never forgot him. In her boudoir she kept the portrait of this friend of her youth, who afterwards became the friend of all her family. It pleased her to see him again—there in her room, just as he had been in those early days, his fine figure set off by the showy uniform.

Frédéric de Lagrange—brother of the Duchesse d'Istria, who used to do the honours of his Château d'Angu—an old friend of Monsieur de Valon, was the second conspicuous figure in the surroundings of this woman of the world. He was one of the most prominent members of the Jockey Club. His racing stables held first rank in the annals of the turf. He was a man of great dignity. His coldness of manner never permitted his intimacy to relapse into familiarity. The Count de Lagrange was never heard to claim Madame de Valon as a friend in public; and yet he had no more devoted or more anxious friend than herself.

The third name which has been coupled with that of Madame de Valon is Pouyer-Quertier. We have shown what she did for him in revealing him to himself, to the Government, and to France.

In reality, as far as is known, Madame de Valon's warmest friendships never went the length of disturbing her life or her conscience. She was more intellectual than tender. Her imagination conquered her heart. It pleased her vanity to distinguish and exalt those whose appearance or position in the world set them above their fellows,

particularly if they possessed the supreme quality in her eyes: a representative character. Her mind, which was pliant and full of illusions, lent itself to exaggeration when necessary. Everything in short seemed possible to that lively and ardent imagination, and had she lived in olden times she would have been admirably fitted to discover and stimulate talent, to establish reputations and bestow favours and success, although somewhat capriciously.

Thus Madame de Valon appears to us to-day: a woman little known outside her own immediate circle, yet one who exercised in her time a notable influence which it is but fair to record. We have found a rare interest in rescuing from the darkness in which it seemed to be enveloped the lost portrait of an uncommon and charming character.

CHAPTER IX

A MARSHAL'S DAUGHTER

SOPHIE DE CASTELLANE, COUNTESS DE BEAULAINCOURT

By way of preamble—Youth of Sophie de Castellane—Wedding festivities at the Château Montgeoffroy—Eccentricities of Monsieur de Contades—A gentlemanly plate-smasher—An attempt to get into the Chamber of Deputies—Exciting election—Madame de Contades in Paris and at Court—Hunting parties—Opinions and anecdotes respecting this phase of Madame de Contades' life—Hours of sentimental melancholy—Two unpublished letters—She becomes Countess de Beaulaincourt—Widow's weeds—A new aspect of life—Madame de Beaulaincourt's salon—*Grande dame* and artificial flower-maker—Curious reminiscences—Madame de Beaulaincourt's archives.

WHILE the octogenarian Madame de Beaulaincourt, with fingers still busy and a clear and active brain, completed the task of classifying her papers which she had begun in 1893—in her seventy-ninth year;[1] while she collected and arranged her private documents, consisting of detached notes, fragments of her memoirs, and voluminous correspondences; while she more especially looked through and put in order the sixteen thousand letters she had found time to write

[1] The date of Madame de Beaulaincourt's birth is given as follows in the Diary of her father, the Marshal de Castellane: "December 2, 1818, my wife was delivered of a daughter, who was named Ruth Charlotte Sophie." She died at the moment when we were completing this study in the *Annales politiques et littéraires*, but not before she had protested loudly against its excessive sincerity.

to her sister, Madame de Hatzfeld,[1] suppressing what was most intimate, preserving the most useful, tearing up, burning and erasing all that must not be made public, or putting aside and annotating what she wished to be made known; while, in short, she was picking her material, it occurred to us to anticipate this historical harvest, and without delay to give an outline of a portrait that will be completed in the near future.

Before taking the name of Beaulaincourt by her second marriage, she had received from her first husband the title of Marquise de Contades, under which she most distinguished herself and made her mark.

Those were the days of her youth, when she had an insatiable desire for amusement and success, when she loved balls, plays, receptions, and was passionately fond of fashionable sports, of riding and hunting parties. Madame de Contades' conspicuous style, her love of "go-ahead" amusements, her lively and fearless nature, her love of adventure, and her sudden whims all lent themselves largely to gossip.

Heredity accounts for her peculiarities.

From her father, Marshal and Count de Castellane, whose extraordinary temperament and military fanaticism have passed into a byword, she inherited a bold spirit, with those abrupt, peremptory and headstrong characteristics which gave her a certain virility; one could imagine that on occasion a sword would not have been out of place in her hand.

She owed to her mother an alert and cultivated intelligence. There was a vast expenditure of wit at Madame de Contades' house, the hostess herself being most prodigal of that sparkling coin. In her drawing-room freedom and gaiety of conversation prevailed. A spirit of liberty, not to be found elsewhere, reigned there.

[1] Her elder sister, Madame de Hatzfeld, wife of the Prussian ambassador, afterwards Madame de Valençay.

SOPHIE DE CASTELLANE, COUNTESS DE DEAULAINCOURT

"Madame de Castellane has the true Gallic spirit," remarked the Marquise de Charnacé to her son, who repeated her words to us some sixty years later.[1]

Sophie de Castellane, as we see, had not suffered either by birth or by nature; while education taught her to know her own value. From the care of a mother, eager to satisfy all her wishes and fancies, she passed on to that of an aunt who hastened to find her a husband.

At sixteen she was a wife and a marchioness. She married her cousin, Henri de Contades, who had just attained his majority and come into an income of £80,000 a year. The marriage was celebrated with great splendour at the estate of Montgeoffroy in Anjou. Illuminations, balls, plays followed each other in such rapid succession that the young châtelaine at once took her place as a leader in provincial society, which accepted her from her first appearance.

She had no intention, however, of languishing in the country. Her impatience to see and be seen demanded a different stage. Moreover, it was soon rumoured that their conjugal bliss was less complete, and less lasting, than might have been hoped, and that already the dawn of wedded happiness was dimmed by clouds, if indeed such happiness ever existed. Judging from appearances, it was doubtful. At Montgeoffroy Monsieur de Contades occupied the first floor, while Madame de Contades lived on the ground floor.[2] Their meetings at table, or on a journey, alternated with more prolonged intervals of separation. Their characters were ill-assorted.

[1] Very often the Countess de Castellane's drawing-rooms were metamorphosed into a theatre. Plays were given there before a large audience of noblemen and *grandes dames*. On March 25, 1851, when Arsène Houssaye's *Comédie à la Fenêtre* was given with a charming air by Auber for an invisible orchestra, there were no less than three hundred spectators drawn from the very *élite* of society.

[2] The Marchioness never hesitated to tell her intimate friends that Monsieur de Contades had never been her husband in the full sense of the word.

Monsieur de Contades had peculiarities. He sprang from an illustrious house, yet it was said his conduct left much to be desired. He had an inveterate habit of whistling and humming in the drawing-room. He had another trick: he used to smash the plates at meals with his elbow. Trick, did I say? This curious amusement degenerated into a mania. He was seen one day at a village fair to purchase several dozen plates, the fragments of which he strewed along the road.[1] There were peccadilloes, doubtless, and trivial disputes. But there were other failings which have been revealed to me of a more intimate nature.

The Marquis de Contades, who was descended from a Marshal of France, was not in the army. It was hoped that by way of compensation he would distinguish himself in politics.

In 1845 he presented himself as a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies at Perpignan, where his father-in-law, General de Castellane, was in command of the division. But the electors did not, unfortunately, look upon his candidature with a favourable eye. There was a considerable disturbance about this affair, and the population of Perpignan, in their zealous support of the republican, Etienne Arago, adopted a quasi-revolutionary attitude extremely displeasing to the Royalists. Monsieur de Castellane's ears were assailed by loud cheers, uttered beneath his very windows. He would gladly have swept the whole crowd off to prison. In answer to his summons, a picket was sent to the Place des Loges from the neighbouring barracks. He gave his men the order to load their rifles. A detachment of mounted *chasseurs* was kept in readiness, with drawn sabres, to charge the unarmed crowd which had been guilty of crying "Vive Arago!"

[1] This story was told me half a century later by an amusing eye-witness, who conjured up before my mind's eye a picture of an old castle in Anjou. "It is sixty years," he added, "since the Marquise de Contades crossed that drawbridge for the first time."

instead of "Vive Contades!" It dispersed, however, of its own accord. The *gendarmes*, infantry, cavalry and artillery then followed suit, and Boniface de Castellane, having had an opportunity of observing that this display of armed force could not alter the poll by so much as a vote, consoled himself at night by writing in his diary that the *methods of intimidation* adopted by Monsieur Arago and his supporters had prevented the success of the good cause!

Contades had his revenge a few months later. He was elected deputy for Murat, a constituency chosen at haphazard, in which he was wholly unknown. Shortly afterwards, however, he abandoned his parliamentary career to enter the diplomatic service. He left, all alone, for Constantinople, which inspired a punster to write that the Marquise had shown her husband the door (*que la marquise avait mis son mari à la Porte*).

Meantime, Madame de Contades herself had not been an inactive witness of the disturbances of the hour. Her need of excitement, her tendency to give advice and to dominate others, did not permit her to remain idle. Circumstances impelled her. Attentive and perspicacious, absent or present, she never lost sight of the chances of the political game. Even when, in her closely fitting riding habit, with the red ribbon over her shoulder, she followed keenly with the Marquis de Coislin's hounds, her thoughts were apt to be elsewhere. She foresaw the destiny of the Republic, and the coming—so propitious to her family—of the man who would create a new court and new titles. Her father's position at the head of the military hierarchy gave her exceptional facilities for helping on the movement, and beneath her careless, light-hearted manner and her gay, vivacious bearing she worked diligently to gather round the man of the hour the elements of power and authority. She admitted the President's aides-de-camp, Commandant Fleury, Colonel Edgar Ney, and Captain

Toulonjeon, to her intimacy, and was constantly to be seen at the Elysée, assisting the Princess Mathilde in doing the honours of the palace. She possessed beauty, a haughty grace, a perfect and remarkably supple figure, bright brown eyes, a certain *chic*, and natural wit.

It is not surprising that Madame de Contades' name was one of the first to be entered on the invitation lists of Fontainebleau and Compiègne. The skilful negotiations carried on for two years by the Montijo family, in order to compass the conquest of a throne, found in her a steadfast and sympathetic ally. Her feminine insight showed her at once that the Emperor was firmly resolved to satisfy his passion, and would listen neither to his ministers nor to any one else who endeavoured to dissuade him from this impolitic marriage. She chose the better part, and joined the camp of victorious love. The Empress could not forget it.

Madame de Contades always liked to reason, discuss, and write about the events of the day; therefore from Paris she maintained an active correspondence with her father, keeping him well informed of all that went on before her eyes, which were always wide awake.

"If this project does not come off," she told him on January 16, 1853, "it is more than probable that the Emperor will not marry at all, for his repugnance to wedlock is generally known, and also the strength of old English ties,[1] which combine to hold him back. Moreover, there is nothing against Mademoiselle de Montijo but inequality of birth; for she is pretty, good, and clever, and I think, too, she has great energy and nobility of mind."

In an earlier letter she expresses her own private and personal satisfaction as follows:—

"On Friday we went by special train, Prince Jérôme

[1] The reference is to the celebrated Miss Howard, whom Louis Napoleon knew in London while his ambitions were as yet unformed.

Napoleon, Monsieur and Madame Drouyn de Lhuys, the Duc de Morny, General Magnan, with his wife and daughter, Monsieur de Maupas, Madame and Mademoiselle de Montijo, Lord and Lady Cowley, Monsieur and Madame de Pierres, and myself. A big dinner, a reception, and a hunt. Splendid run through the forest, which was full of people crying at the top of their voices 'Vive l'Empereur!'"[1]

And again, on the morning of December 2:—

"I have just come from the Tuileries. My ears still ache. When Marshal de St. Arnaud read the Emperor's proclamation, the enthusiasm rose to frenzy."

Upon the aspect of Paris in 1855 and 1856, upon the official visit of the Queen of England, upon the preliminaries and the consequences, as foreseen, of the Italian War, the movements of troops, the hopes of the generals, upon expected promotions—upon all these subjects her pen pours forth the latest information. All through her correspondence runs an expression of the satisfaction she derived from the society in which she found herself.

"We are enjoying ourselves very much. . . . Pauline and I hardly find time to write, since we are out all day. . . . It is one round of amusement. . . . I write to the accompaniment of serenades. . . . Every night there is a fresh festivity. . . . When will all these entertainments end? Not yet, I think, for when the Congress is over we shall have to begin again for the christening."

So much delight may have left her a little languid; she is never overcome by it. Her nerves are proof against the exhaustion of social functions.

Madame de Contades was too conspicuous a figure to

[1] About the same time, that is, in October, 1852, the Marshal de Castellane wrote in his notebook: "My daughter Contades writes me from Paris, dated the 10th, at noon: 'Great news! Last night, in a speech to the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce, the Prince accepted the Empire. The speech was not reported by telegraph for fear of some mistake.'"

escape the remarks of the gallery. There are frequent allusions to her in the society notices of the day, treating in epigrammatic form the eccentricities and characteristics of the bold horsewoman. Her features and character were constantly described; she is drawn full face and in profile, and sometimes without flattery.

In 1862 a clever writer sketched her with a mordant pen. Under the fictitious name of Diana the Huntress she was drawn to the life; all the initiated recognized her at once.

But life brought her so many flowers that she could well bear a few thorns.

At all the hunting centres which she frequented, she was followed by a small court, and the best qualified were the most eager for her attention. She was not invariably gracious to those who paid homage to her youth, showing herself a very capricious queen, and often refusing even a gracious smile. Once at a dinner this "Célimène étourdie" was seen to select two camellias from a costly bouquet that one of her admirers, a viscount, used to send her daily, and fastening them into the button-holes of the two marquises sitting beside her, she tossed the rest of the bouquet over her shoulder. The next day, with even more cruel irony, she offered the unhappy viscount a cup of tea in which she had dipped her slipper!

But we must hasten to add that she treated men like the Marquis de Coislin and General Fleury in a less unceremonious fashion.

The former, a gentleman of the old school, was quite a character. He was a type. Of almost colossal stature, the Marquis de Coislin produced at first sight the impression of an extremely arrogant man; there was a look in his eye which betokened an iron will and paralysed strangers. Nevertheless, where love or friendship were concerned, the same face was capable of a sudden softening of expression which betrayed a very tender heart.

He exercised some ascendancy, to his cost and also to his profit, on the excitable imagination of the Marquise de Contades.

As for Fleury, soldier and diplomatist, a nobleman of exquisite manners, of a pliant and penetrating mind, in a word, a lady-killer, it is no longer an indiscretion to state that he was very far from indifferent to her. She experienced a sentimental sorrow at the enforced separation entailed by Fleury's marriage, and wrote some expressive letters to that amiable comforter Countess Le Hon, of which the following is an example:—

"DEAR MADAME,—I want a private talk with you. A dreadful misfortune has happened to me. You have such a kind heart. You know what it is to love, and you can advise me better than any one else. I am not in a condition to see anybody. There is much suffering in this world. I will tell you all about it, and meantime, I beg you to keep this entirely secret.

"A thousand affectionate remembrances.

"CASTELLANE DE CONTADES."

After the interview she writes:—

"Yes, dear madame; but I am in such a nervous condition that you will excuse me, will you not? I am so much obliged to you for the good advice you gave me the other day. I have tried to follow it; but the further I go, the more terribly I suffer.

"I tremble lest you may still have something painful to tell me. My cup is full. I have no strength left, and my head will turn in the end!

"CASTELLANE DE CONTADES."

This heartache passed away, and her troubles were forgotten.

Ill-natured gossip, as we have said, was very busy with

the sayings and doings of the Marquise de Contades. After she became Countess de Beaulaincourt the scandal-mongers found no further occasion to exercise their tongues. The date of this second marriage is chronicled in the Marshal's diary.

"On October 14, 1859," he remarks, "I went to fetch my daughter Contades, and escorted her to the church of St. Philippe du Roule, where the marriage was celebrated at two o'clock in the afternoon. My daughter will henceforth be known as the Countess de Beaulaincourt-Marles."

Monsieur de Beaulaincourt was only a captain in the artillery of the guard. His upright character, strong will, and military spirit all promised rapid advancement. On the very day after the wedding, ways and means were provided for him. A new office was created for him, compatible with the dignity of the daughter of a marshal of France. He was sent as military attaché to Berlin. He was already beginning to prove the value of this appointment, which he was the first to occupy, by his judicious criticisms on the arms, tactics and discipline of the Prussian army—details hitherto neglected in France—when he met with a terrible accident. Thrown from his horse during the manœuvres, he died under the most painful conditions.

Madame de Beaulaincourt was overwhelmed with grief at this blow. From that time she led a more retired life, and her tastes became more peaceful and subdued.

She had been devoted, above all else, to open-air sports, such as the excitement of horse exercise,[1] which allows a courageous woman to mask the gentle, delicate traits of femininity beneath a proud, determined bearing. In the Imperial hunts nobody was more noticed that the Marquise

[1] Her courage on horseback was equal to any test. I have heard that she rode her horse up the steep steps of the porch of the Château Montgeoffroy.

de Contades, whose erect and perfect figure was never seen to better advantage than when, well mounted on a mettlesome horse, she threaded her way among the coloured hunting-coats and dolmans, or galloped at top speed, carried away by the movement and the inspiriting echo of the huntsman's horn. In those moments of animation and youthful expansion she made the best impression upon herself and others. Of all her portraits, the one she preferred to the last was a statuette which represented her wearing a three-cornered hat, with a riding-whip in her hand, just as she had appeared many a time at Compiègne, sporting the hunt button, and always first in the field, her eyes sparkling with a cruel fire when the view-halloo rang out.

Many years passed. It was now long since she had galloped through the leafy glades of the forest. But a more enduring satisfaction was left to Madame de Beaulaincourt. To lead the conversation, to be the life and soul of a society in which the vain distinctions of rank and birth were merged, to preside over a political or literary salon, which should also have its value and its brightness; this was now her desire, to which she sacrificed a good deal, and saw her ambition gratified for half a century.

At her house, minds of the very first rank came together, sparkling and flashing in the many facets of brilliant conversation. Sainte-Beuve came more than once in search of information. Mérimée was one of her most regular callers. On one of the shelves of her library might be seen a volume by the philosopher Caro, bearing on its title page this flattering dedication: *To the Guardian of good French.* Many Academicians were proud to frequent her house. It is related that to one of them, Lavisse, she talked over the two phases of her life with unconventional frankness, winding up with the words: "Everything might be said of the Marquise de Contades,

because she did everything; nothing can be said of Madame de Beaulaincourt."

Emile Ollivier went willingly and frequently to call on her. He specially enjoyed finding her alone, when he would talk freely of the past, describing events with all the warmth and eloquence which had distinguished him in his best days in the Chamber. Sometimes they shared the same views, but often they were at variance; he had no love for the Empress; she, on the other hand, had remained faithful to her. One afternoon the Countess and her secretary, Monsieur Le Breton, who related this story, were alone in the drawing-room with the former minister of 1870. The conversation turned upon those tragic days. Ollivier harked back to his visionary project, which in his opinion would have saved the Empire, saved the dynasty, and arrested the torrent of rebellion by a counter-current of affection and popularity. In the heat of his discourse he walked up and down the great room. The blood rushed to his head. Out of doors the cold was severe, but regardless of the temperature he opened the window, and, for over an hour, intoxicated himself with the vision he had evoked: the Empress, alone with her son, in an open carriage, driving through the streets of Paris, showing herself courageously to the populace and recapturing the popular sympathy before the Republicans had time to set an excited mob in pursuit of her. Madame de Beaulaincourt, who liked to do some of the talking herself, listened silently on this occasion; then, turning towards Le Breton, she said: "That is the way he used to talk in those days!"

There is generally a worm concealed in the heart of the rose. Castellane's daughter never erred on the side of excessive amiability. The sharpness of her tongue was not neutralized by the gaiety of her manner.

Without being either morose or peevish—being rather optimistic by temperament—she was apt to be unkind and

THE DUKE OF HAMILTON'S DAUGHTER

scathing in speech. This was one of the links between her and the sarcastic Mérimée. He tells her so himself in that curious letter which has been quoted elsewhere, without mentioning names, but which was actually addressed to Madame de Beaulaincourt :—

"CANNES, *September* 20, 1867.

"Long live the little shoes and their contents! I am of the opinion of a friend of mine, an English lady, who always said she was very particular about shoes and stockings. But it is not only for your feet, madame, that I admire and love you; I love you also because you are *biting*, as you do me the honour to say of me. There is nothing I hate so much as people who are always sweet. I like vigour in friendship as in other things, and those who are not sensitive in this respect must be devoid of feeling and carry their hearts on the right side. Between ourselves, it appears to me that this misplacement is common enough in these days.

"MÉRIMÉE."[1]

In any case, the time spent with Madame de Beaulaincourt was never wasted. Many a journalist left her salon to convert into a good story for the *Gaulois* or *Figaro* some arrow from her quiver, a word dropped from her lips, an epigram or piquant anecdote which she had carelessly contributed to the conversation

She talked or listened, generally working at the same time with extraordinary perseverance; and the work

[1] It was to Madame de Beaulaincourt that Mérimée, when nearing his end, wrote some of his last words, in which he who had all his life passed for a cold-hearted scoffer revealed a fund of feeling which he had carefully concealed from himself and the world for sixty years. It is true he only shows it in railing a little at himself and others.

"All my life," he tells her, "I have tried to rid myself of prejudices, to be a citizen of the world first and French afterwards, but none of these philosophic mantles are worth anything. I bleed to-day for the wounds of these fools of Frenchmen, I weep for their humiliations, and ungrateful and absurd as they are, I love them still." (September 13, 1870. Mérimée expired almost suddenly six days later.)

which engrossed her so deeply that she never laid it aside, even to welcome her guests, was neither embroidery nor woolwork, but the twisting of stems and sorting of many-coloured petals with which to make artificial flowers, scentless but lasting, to set in rivalry beside the superb roses from her gardens at Acosta. Not the least original feature of her salon was to see her amid the fine portraits of the Castellanes and Contades, and other paintings of great value, seated at a deal table on which was strewed the complete outfit of an artificial flower-maker: pincers, irons, phials of every colour; and to watch her deft fingers turning out pinks, chrysanthemums, and gladioli, while visitors came and went, or chatted around her.

The secret of the popularity she enjoyed to a very advanced age was her vast fund of information. Her astonishing memory retained everything she had seen or heard. To hear her, for instance, relate how she had twice dined with Talleyrand, and how on both occasions the malicious old man had taken pains to bring the conversation round to the deformity of Madame de Staël, for which Monsieur and Madame Necker had been obliged to have an instrument made to bring her feet and legs into the proper position; or again, to hear her describe, towards the close of 1904, the impression made on her childish mind by Chateaubriand, or by Monsieur de Montlosier, both frequent visitors at her mother's house, made one feel, as her friend Madame Thérèse Bentzon once remarked, as though one had seen a vision from the historic past. It gave the same sensation of remote surprise that I once experienced when the Marquis de Charnacé repeated to me something he had heard from his great-uncle, whom he had known well, and who had been a page to Louis XV. Now, in 1906, we may almost count on our fingers those who knew one of Louis XV's pages in their youth, or heard Talleyrand's indiscretions on the subject of Germaine Necker! More extraordinary still, that im-

mortal opera-goer, the nonagenarian Charles Bocher, once told me that as a child he had talked to Cassini, whose early years had been contemporary with the setting of the *Roi Soleil*, so that between Louis XIV and Bocher there was but one intervening life!

One afternoon the Goncourt brothers, on their way to call on Madame de Beaulaincourt at the Rue de Miromesnil, hoping to get from her some priceless record, historical and artistic, agreed that some very curious pages of history might be written at the dictation of that clever old woman with her inexhaustible flow of conversation.

She thought so too. Her archives were richly supplied. The voluminous daily correspondence which she had maintained with her sister, the Countess de Hatzfeldt—whose domestic virtues did not prevent her from possessing a bright and happy wit, and whose smart sayings were constantly quoted and repeated—constituted an anecdotic history of the Second Empire, in which the Court was pictured to the life, with its restlessness, its enthusiasms, its frivolous anxieties and trivial intrigues. The same applied to Madame de Hatzfeldt's confidences about the Court of Berlin. Madame de Beaulaincourt's secretary, Monsieur Le Breton, a learned man with great discrimination and taste, had carefully classified, according to date and subject, this mass of evidence, collected during a long life by a keen observer. Six months before her death she took it into her head to look through her papers; an unfortunate impulse, for in the process she inextricably confused the neatly sorted documents. She used from time to time to go through this formality of sifting and clearing out her papers. On each occasion she burnt a quantity, and many letters and intimate documents were thus destroyed or mutilated.

Four days before her sudden passing away, Madame de Beaulaincourt sent for and saw a printer. Acting on the advice of some of her friends, she had set aside all the

letters written from Egypt during her princely journey on the Nile in 1863. Remembering how his father Mehemet had been fêted at Lyons by Marshal de Castellane, with floating banners and flags, reviews and sham-fights, in which the fanatic warrior delighted, Ismaïl Pacha had placed at her disposal one of the ships of his own fleet, sumptuously decorated and festooned with flags, in which for two months she had journeyed up the great river, admiring, observing, and writing down all her impressions. She saw a very different Egypt from the English Egypt of to-day; for then the influence of Lesseps' country was paramount, and the person of Ismaïl was surrounded by French officers who had reorganized and trained the army of the Viceroy.

All these detached papers had to pass through the hands of her nephew, Count Stanislas de Castellane, to whom Madame de Beaulaincourt bequeathed her fortune and her documents, notwithstanding the fact that she had only a lukewarm affection for him. "I shall put all that on one side," said the heir; "we can consider it later on." No doubt some vestiges will survive. If Madame de Beaulaincourt failed to leave to posterity any memoirs in the true sense (and to judge from her editing of her father's diary, published without any attempt to alleviate its dryness, she seems to have possessed very little talent for literary composition), there will be at least a mass of instructive details, curious observations and characteristic deductions which more skilful hands than hers will know how to place in a valuable and enduring setting.

CHAPTER X

A WORLDLY LIFE

MÉLANIE DE BUSSIÈRE, COUNTESS DE POURTALÈS

A glance at the salons of the Opposition—Where to go?—An appearance at the Tuileries—Madame de Pourtalès in her seventeenth year—Festivities and fashionable events—At Compiègne—Theatricals—A *grande dame* at rehearsal—Fragments of letters from Madame de Pourtalès and Princess Metternich—More serious subjects of consideration—In Berlin—Sad forebodings—A page of history—War between Strasburg and Paris—Ducrot's letter to General Frossard—The end—Imperialist reminiscences—The salons of Madame de Pourtalès—A talk about Madame de Castiglione—Close of the sketch.

"MADAME de Pourtalès was always much talked about," another famous *habituée* of the Tuileries once remarked to me.

In the April of her life, when her youthful grace was seen in the most enviable of settings, portrait painters vied with each other to enhance the charms of their model. Later on, when the Empire was near its decline, when luck and prosperity were on the wane, she became directly and unexpectedly connected with a series of events of such gravity that echo was busy with her name for long afterwards. From that time, her active participation in social and charitable functions made her —against her wish and without her seeking—one of the most prominent figures of the time. From day to day the society chroniclers continued to busy themselves, as

before, with the dinners and receptions she gave, or with those she attended, prompted by that indefatigable benevolence which cannot allow persons of a certain rank in the world to meet together for conversation, amusement, or music in their own homes without publishing the fact throughout Paris and the provinces.

While still very young, Madame de Pourtalès obtained access to Imperialist society through the medium of her marriage. Granddaughter of the Baroness de Franck, daughter of Alfred Renouard de Bussière, a great Alsatian manufacturer, whose initiative started or developed enormous business enterprises, and who for quarter of a century was a member of the *Corps Législatif*, she married Edmond de Pourtalès in her seventeenth year. This was a union of two hearts and two fortunes, for her husband belonged to a family of Swiss bankers, established in Paris since 1810, and greatly enriched by financial operations. The title of Count had been bestowed on the family by Frederick II, at a time when the canton of Neuchâtel was a fief of Prussia.

As soon as the young married couple were magnificently installed in Paris, they had to consider their position; in other words, to choose between a remnant of Royalist society, irreconcilable, brooding, and sulky, and the new Court, whither all the prettiest and smartest women of Paris were now hastening on light and nimble feet, quite undeterred by the ill-humour of the aristocratic Faubourg.

But the salons of the Opposition had not yet laid down their arms. Far from it. Whilst the "parvenus" on the throne, punctilious as to etiquette, and extremely anxious to atone, by the addition of a few authentic coats-of-arms, for the somewhat obscure and exotic elements of the mushroom aristocracy which formed the bulk of their adherents, lavished polite attentions on the titled families, the bluest blood held themselves disdainfully aloof. The willing slaves of a conventional standard of superiority, and

proud of perpetuating, through all revolutions of ideas and customs, that spirit of serfdom and seignorial domesticity introduced by Louis XIV, these aristocratic Paladins—whose whole world was limited to the Court—took refuge in a contemptuous isolation.

This uncompromising attitude was more particularly noticeable among women, and is one of the most curious features of the society of that day. Fundamentally Legitimist, or impregnated with Orléanism, they were far more irreconcilable than the men, who—since one must live—were forced to nurse practical interests, to adapt themselves to circumstances, and sooner or later to get on to the lists of appointments and promotions. Several ladies, whose husbands had surrendered for the common weal, affected to stand aloof, or only consented on compulsion to mingle with a crowd of upstarts who imagined that they formed a court! It followed that on more than one occasion, as we know from an eye-witness of this little comedy of conflicting pride and interest, one might see the Count, the Marquis, or the Duke of —— hob-nobbing at the Tuileries, while their wives, brought thither by a sense of duty, betrayed by their manner that they considered themselves out of their element, and with contemptuous hostility aimed small shafts of sarcasm at those in power, who did not care a jot.

Either by skill or by coquetry, Madame de Pourtalès amused herself with the situation; she conciliated both extremes established friendly relations in both camps, and skimmed the cream from both parties. Later on it was remarked that with a pretty bravado she invited women to her autumn parties who were hopelessly out of favour with the reigning powers.

As for the Count de Pourtalès, his foreign birth left him indifferent as to the colour of his flag. He turned to the rising sun and presented his wife at the Tuileries; her success was so striking that she returned a fervent

Imperialist. As a matter of fact, she was impelled in that direction both by her own position and that of her father, the Baron de Bussière, who had been appointed Governor of the Mint.

She made her first appearance at a great ball given by the Empress. On all sides there gleamed bare shoulders and a profusion of new jewels. Constellations of precious stones sparkled on white skins and flashed in the hair. Young and radiant faces were to be seen in all directions. They were here to-day, just as they would be elsewhere to-morrow, a part of the setting, like the roses or camellias in a basket of choice flowers. Madame de Pourtalès was immediately distinguished from the crowd.

The delicate contour and pleasing effect of her whole face, with her expressive blue eyes, her beautiful hair of a dull golden hue, set off to great advantage above her low brow by the style of hairdressing then in vogue, and by the diamonds and pearls which nestled in the coils piled high on her head; a skin which Hamilton or Marivaux would have described as rose-petals steeped in milk; a slim, rounded figure and exquisite carriage; in short, a sum total of natural charms which made her look in her diaphanous muslin draperies like some living work of art. Less than this would have sufficed to attract all eyes and make her the subject of general conversation.

Beneath her air of gaiety, which was not devoid of affectation, she had a fund of moral principle derived from her education and her Protestantism, which did not prevent her from having also the tastes and gifts that make for pleasure. The Empress was captivated at first sight and placed her name on the list of her Mondays.[1]

[1] Only a strictly limited number of invitations were ever issued for the quiet Mondays, five or six hundred at the most.

"I remember," says Madame Carette in her *Souvenirs*, "that I then (about 1859) saw the Countess de Pourtalès and the Marquise de Galliffet for the first time. They faced each other in the same quadrille. Impossible to see a prettier picture than that of these two persons, entirely different in their type of beauty, but equally graceful, lively, and elegant."

MÉLANIE DE BUSSIÈRE, COUNTESS DE POURTALÈS
(From the painting by Carolus-Duran)

Then Madame de Metternich, a great influence in society, took a strong liking to her which ripened into a lifelong friendship,[1] and offered to take her under her wing. Henceforward the busy ambassadress never ceased to push the interests and sing the praises of her *protégée*. She made her the fashionable type of beauty.

It was not a difficult task. The world had only compliments in return for the gifts which prodigal nature had accorded to Madame de Pourtalès. I will not attempt to count the flowers which were strewn in her path. She was proclaimed one of the perfections of the Court. It was said and repeated on all sides, and with more licence than perhaps was desirable.

Here is a story related to me.

One evening, at the house of the minister Duchâtel, the company was admiring his latest artistic acquisition "La Source," a masterpiece by Ingres. The light, thrown directly on the canvas, brought out the pure and charming forms in their chaste nudity. The spectators discussed the power of genius and the eternal youth of art. The ideal and the real were compared. Some bold comparisons were put forward. Just then Madame de Pourtalès happened to pass by. One, bolder than the rest, arguing from the known to the unknown, pretended to confuse the two beauties. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "here we have Madame de Pourtalès in morning and evening dress." He spoke only on presumption. Could any one be seriously vexed?

[1] Through many prolonged intervals of separation, when Paris was exchanged for Vienna or Robertsau, the Pourtalès' estate in Alsace, and during the Princess's annual visits to Bohemia and Hungary, they kept up a regular and affectionate correspondence. It would be interesting to glance through these letters, in which Madame de Metternich, with the facile pen and spontaneous style which characterizes all her writing, must have laid bare her true character as a woman and her originality of mind, throwing light on some of those outbursts of temper which her friends tried to put down to eccentricity, because she made no effort to check or conceal them.

In intimate conversation, or correspondence, it seemed impossible to mention her without adding some flattering epithet which had become a stock phrase applied to her beauty: "the lovely Countess," or "the pretty Countess," or perhaps, with a touch of familiarity explained by constant social intercourse, "the charming Mélanie," as in a letter written by the Marquis de Galliffet to one of his friends, an officer in the Guides. The Marquis, this spoilt darling of the Court, had been sent by way of penance to the borders of the Sahara. Cast away in Kabylia, he hunted down the last of the rebels, while he thought longingly of Paris. He dreamed of his friends, of the newspapers, of the theatres, of Aurélien Scholl's comments on events of the day, and all the gaieties of the boulevards. He asks for news, especially for gossip, and protests that he hopes to be remembered by all. What is going on? What is being said at Court? And then, reverting to Madame de Pourtalès, who was a great friend of the Marquise de Galliffet, he adds:—

"When you see the lovely Mélanie, place my undying regrets at her feet. Edmond will not understand, but she will for both of them."

There are certain types of women who are the despair of their rivals. Nevertheless Madame de Pourtalès contrived to inspire more affection than jealousy. Many women of charm and distinction were to be met at Madame de Pourtalès' receptions. She was surrounded by a pleiad of illustrious and fashionable people. A few were admitted to a closer intimacy. Amongst these were Fitz-James, Metternich, Sagan, Galliffet, Louis de Turenne. Of those who appeared most frequently in her salon, one of the most conspicuous was the naval officer, Charles de Fitz-James, a man of great spirit and wit—the hereditary wit of the Fitz-James family.

Pleasant as she was to look upon, she was even more delightful to listen to, with her accurate perception of the

value of words, her apposite retorts, and the radiant animation which distinguished her. She almost equalled those fascinating women of a past generation, whose sparkling conversation was the delight of their circle, or those who, playing their part to perfection, had the rare gift of making others converse. There was some exaggeration shown in this respect. One writer carried flattery so far as to congratulate her on having had the tact not to attempt the ungrateful rôle of a Madame de Staël, or a Juliette Récamier. "Ungrateful!" the adjective is the perfection of flattery. As if it were possible to be or not to be—at will—a Madame de Staël or a Juliette de Récamier! Madame de Pourtalès could not have been other than she was: a most fascinating woman, as intelligent as she was good, and neither aspiring nor pretending to any dazzling superiority of mind; a part which surely leaves little to be desired. If the Princess Mathilde and the Countess de Beaumont occupied themselves seriously with literature, Madame de Pourtalès, although passionately fond of art,[1] was almost exclusively a woman of the world.

This world would have been surprised had she failed to appear each time in some marvellous and unique toilette at all the famous entertainments given by the Austrian ambassadress, social events which formed the theme of conversation for weeks beforehand. How should she fail to carry off the palm in a sphere where many less gifted by nature shone by dint of art?

Her own receptions were also very brilliant. Her house was considered as one of the most luxurious and smartest in Paris. She did the honours with a grace and simplicity of manner which condoned her wealth. That was the striking and individual note of her hospitality: she united luxury to a profusion of natural beauties. It was said, no doubt with considerable exaggeration, that at one of

[1] All the paintings in her drawing-rooms and picture gallery are gems; her house is a perfect museum.

her first and most sumptuous entertainments Madame de Pourtalès spent the sum of 80,000 francs in decorating her house from top to bottom with garlands and bouquets of flowers. Her love of these amounted to a passion. The Prince de Sagan was fully aware of this when he gave a party in her honour, and with superb gallantry spent 25,000 francs on camellias. The story, if true, is pretty—and so is the figure. I had both from the Countess d'Orzegowska, who doubtless had not troubled to verify the facts.

Slander or calumny is always busy with the name of a good-looking woman. Some one has said, "Gossip is the hornet of beautiful, young, and attractive women." It was inevitable that Madame de Pourtalès should be credited with vague imprudences, such as we are told of her and Madame de Metternich by an untrustworthy historian on page 123 of his book, *The Court of Napoleon III.* She fared no better than other aristocratic ladies at the hands of a certain treacherous writer, the Tallemant des Réaux of the Second Empire, who lightly spread a number of idle rumours, because he asserts as having actually taken place everything which his spiteful mind imagines as possible. The Countess's reputation, however, did not suffer. In any case it is a great charm to set virtue in a pleasing light. Eager, both as wife and mother, to make life agreeable and smooth for those she loved, it could never have been said of Madame de Pourtalès, as of the Princess Clotilde, that she was discouragingly virtuous.

Madame de Metternich used to invent a fresh scheme every day in order to satisfy in others the need of change and amusement which is developed by a life given up entirely to pleasure. In this her friends had a laudable ambition to second her. Madame de Pourtalès had also her vagaries. From one of these originated the club of "The Loutons and Loutonnes." This was a guild of

laughter, a union of fashionable people seeking an outlet for a surplus of youthful spirits, a friendly gathering of fortunate and idle beings whose object was to stimulate each other's wit and add fresh savour to life, which furnished a pretext for much gossip.

As a matter of fact, melancholy was banished from this club, and the members aided each other with childish amiability to keep it at bay.

One instance, a very simple tale, reached me long afterwards through the medium of a faithful memory.

One night, at her house in the Rue Tronchet, Madame de Pourtalès gave a dinner, to be followed by a reception. A number of officials were invited. Torches were lighted. Carriages drove up one after the other. The staircase was lined on both sides by footmen in knee-breeches with powdered heads. They handed up the names of the arrivals from step to step to the door of the reception-room on the first floor—high-sounding, brilliant, and illustrious names, which by some unlucky accident never reached their destination without being mangled on the way. "Count *Walezowski*," said a clumsy footman, turning his head to the man on his left, who repeated it as best he could. In the cloakroom it was noticed that the service was very bad. The minister made a covert allusion to the fact. "Yes," replied Madame de Pourtalès, with a smile, "we have just changed our servants. We must have patience." Just then, impetuous and quick-tempered, Madame de Metternich entered the room, announced as "Madame de Materna," considerably ruffled because her superb cloak, fresh from the hands of Worth, had been rolled up by a clumsy lackey like the commonest mantle. "Really, my dear Mélanie," she exclaimed, "what has happened to your servants? What sort of people have you engaged?" Again Madame de Pourtalès murmured her apologies. Meantime, the company having all arrived, dinner was

announced. The dining-room doors were thrown wide open. To the utter astonishment of the guests, it was seen that the footmen, in their scarlet breeches and powdered hair, had forestalled the company. Comfortably seated at the table, they seemed about to fall upon the food.

What impertinence! Not so great as it seemed, however. The gentlemen in livery were soon recognized. They were all members of the club—Loutons awaiting their Loutonnes—the Duke of ——, the Marquis of ——. The make-up had been complete, and all the company had been taken in. The little comedy had been skilfully played. Coats were quickly changed, as in the scene from Molière's *Précieuses Ridicules*, only reversing the characters of the play, and the evening passed in the gayest fashion possible.

When in November the Empress recommenced her "Compiègnes," the guests at which were carefully classed and received with the utmost ceremony, Madame de Pourtalès found herself among the favoured few who, having comfortably "made her nest," could look on at the curiously mixed crowds who came down on stated occasions.

At the time she made her debut there, the Compiègne parties were very much under the influence of the excitable Madame de Metternich. The taste for artistic or fantastic amusements had been introduced, and at times etiquette went to the winds. Except for the great hunts—which only took place occasionally—at which the ladies performed wondrous feats of horsemanship, and a crowd of noblemen wearing the "hunt button," attended by huntsmen, beaters and hounds, dashed in pursuit of the stag, finding and killing with a great hue and cry—except for these organized massacres, theatrical performances constituted the favourite amusement at the Château. Every eight or ten days the artistes of the Comédie

Française and Gymnase were commanded to perform at Compiègne. Bacciochi suggested to the Empress the choice of plays. Comedies alternated with vaudevilles on the programme. The competition to obtain invitations was extraordinary. But, once present, the brilliant audience was far less interested in the talents displayed by the playwright or the players. It may be said, indeed, that the intellectual atmosphere was decidedly cold. To the persons invited to be present, the interest of the occasion was quite apart from the spectacle. The guests scarcely troubled to listen. Their attention was not for the play; all eyes were turned elsewhere, wandering round the house, and centring chiefly upon the Imperial box. To them, the performance was enacted in the house, not upon the stage; they were wholly occupied with the celebrities present, the favourites of the hour, the dresses, and a thousand similar details which had nothing to do with the play.

Interest was keener, and the relations between actors and audience of a more responsive character, when amateur theatricals took place at Compiègne. This was the latest fashion, and was cultivated in most of the leading fashionable houses. The châteaux of Chenonceaux, Valençay, and Brissac all had their own private theatres. In many houses during the autumn season, hot-houses, orangeries, or other outbuildings were hastily turned into improvised theatres. In 1862 Count Léon de Béthune gave, in the vast outbuildings of the Hôtel Scillière on the Esplanade des Invalides, a performance of *Henri III*, in which the players were amateurs and the acting extraordinarily good. The young Countess Edmond de Pourtalès, in the small part of a tirewoman, was a perfect apparition and her costume a wonder.

At Compiègne this was the favourite amusement. Under the inspiring leadership of the Princesse de Metternich it was a continuous agitation, a feverish excitement

and bustle. Long before the curtain went up there was a buzz of conjecture and comment throughout the Château. In the bedrooms and in the shrubberies it was the sole topic of talk. Criticism and expectations were equally keen. All knew each other well. Were not all therefore entitled to judge, applaud, and criticize freely? Curiosity, generally kindly, but sometimes a trifle carping and jealous, worked up to a climax.

Madame de Pourtalès was a staunch coadjutor of Madame de Metternich. She had less dash and "go," but plenty of genuine goodwill and gaiety. She, too, collaborated, worked, and supplied fresh ideas, and brought her imagination and a touch of humour to bear upon the extravaganza which was so much talked of, and was expected to be the triumph of the series. In 1865 immense trouble was taken over the play already mentioned, *Les Commentaires de César*, which was only performed two or three times, yet made as much noise in the world as many plays that attain their hundredth performance. Like the Princesse de Metternich, Baroness Laure de Rothschild, or the Marquise de Galliffet, Madame de Pourtalès, in the course of the more or less irregular rehearsals, was often moved to pour out to the authors in lively and amusing letters, either the anguish of the actress by no means sure of herself, or doubts as to some detail in her part or her costume; in a word, all those little anxieties inspired by the mixed joy and terror involved in amateur theatricals.

"Your letter," she wrote on one occasion, "has been following me from place to place, and I have only just received it. I am leaving for Munich and shall be back at Robertsau on October 2. Send all the parts to me there by the 1st. Do you really think I can accept both? For you, my old friend, I would do and attempt much; but have a little regard for my vanity. You know I am a very poor actress, except perhaps in the part of Madame

Bouillabaisse, and then . . . Well, I will do what I can; and what I cannot, I will all the same, for your sake, my good Massa.

"I shake your hand as I gallop.

"We are going hunting. Our last day, alas!

"All your couplets are adorable.

"BUSSIÈRE DE POURTALÈS."

Another letter touches two subjects in which she appears to be equally interested: an important marriage, which is a good deal talked about, and the part which she is studying at the moment. It would seem that her principal curiosity is not about the theatrical matter.

"MY DEAR MASSA,—Will you make another couplet for me to take the place of 'Plus de boudoirs charmants?'

"I received my part in *L'Hôtel des Ventes*, which has been slightly altered, and I prefer it as it is now. I am working hard for you. Do let me have a line to say whether Mouchy's marriage has fallen through.[1] Has the comedy been chosen yet?

"Find out for me, too, about what date our series is likely to come off. We shall want eight rehearsals to get it into shape, so that if we are to play on the 25th we ought to arrive not later than the 16th.

"Yes, try to let me know this.

"All the same, this marriage astonishes me. And you? Well, we must have a talk about it.

"Affectionately yours,

"BUSSIÈRE DE POURTALÈS."

[1] The Duc de Mouchy, Duc de Poix, was about to marry Princess Anne Murat, granddaughter of the King of Naples and of Caroline Bonaparte, and one of the daughters of the Prince of Ponte Corvo, who was recognized as Prince and Highness in 1858.

Madame de Metternich then picks up her nimble pen to suggest alterations in the extravaganza and certain additions for the benefit of the prettiest of her players.

"*September* 25, 1867.

"Madame de Pourtalès has had an excellent idea, to make Prudhomme's[1] wife follow him on his journey to Paris, because she has discovered that he is playing her tricks. The said wife must be pretty; but to pursue her husband she must be disguised as a ridiculous old woman.

"In the second act, furious at being taken for an ugly old woman, Madame de Pourtalès will appear once more in her true aspect. Needless to say, every one will jeer at such a stupid husband!

"Madame de Pourtalès, thus caricatured as in *Le Voyage à Versailles*, would produce an extraordinary sensation; the audience would laugh until they cried to see her so changed. Here is another idea, to let Madame Prudhomme run through the piece. I make you a present of the suggestion. You will do wonders with it.

"I do not think the play will come off during the visit of the sovereigns.[2] It will be played about the middle of November.

"We are hunting with all our might, leading the life of savages, in the woods from morning to night, getting up with the sun and going to bed with the hens.

"I shake both your hands and implore you to work *hard*.

"PAULINE METTERNICH."

With a gleam of malice the clever Princess slips in this little hint to the author, by way of postscript:—

"Try to keep off the lines of *Les Commentaires de César*, so that no comparisons can be made."

[1] The *compère* of the play.
[2] The Emperor and Empress of Austria.

And again :—

"Madame de Pourtalès begs you not to forget Monsieur Dupin's speech,[1] and wants to know whether you do not think it would be amusing for her to appear in a hideous and common dress which she could take or throw off before the audience, showing underneath it some very pretty toilette. There might be a few words of this sort: 'You can all see that Monsieur Dupin is annoyed with women, and wants to make them ugly. Fashion will prove the truth of this. Judge whether her decrees are not better worth following than those of this horrid man.'

"Thereupon, change of costume before the eyes of the audience. A pretty little effect, is it not?

"P. METTERNICH."

Thus we see that both at Compiègne and Paris the time passed merrily enough.

Bright days and fine evenings brought with them an unending succession of great gatherings, balls at the Tuileries, gala entertainments of all kinds, and everywhere among those most sought and surrounded might be seen the fortunate Countess Mélanie de Pourtalès.

Up to the present, what had she learnt of life? She had known all the satisfactions of vanity and society. Society: noise, a fleeting vapour, a whiff of perfume which scents the air, floats past, and is lost. The events of the period, crossing the circumstances of her life, were to bring her some far deeper impressions. She had her page in history; and this page which we are about to reopen will continue to exist in the chronicles of her time. It can never be torn out.

Monsieur and Madame Pourtalès were in the habit of travelling and making long stays abroad. When not

[1] This speech "Against the Luxury of Women" raised a storm and called down on all sides a shower of pamphlets.

detained for the season by the attractions of Robertsau, in Alsace, that picturesque corner of ancient Gaul, they willingly accepted the friendly invitations of the Princesse de Metternich to join the hunting parties on her Bohemian and Hungarian estates. Sometimes they stayed in Germany, and in 1868 they went to Berlin, where they had family connexions. Not that the Countess was Prussian by marriage, as General Ducrot believed and stated. By marriage, as by birth, she had but one fatherland; for Monsieur de Pourtalès, born in Paris of Swiss parents, was descended from an old Protestant family who had crossed the Swiss frontier after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He had claimed his right as a Frenchman on the morrow of Sadowa, and, long before then, had registered his two eldest children according to the French civil law; but it is true that some members of his family were settled in Berlin. Besides these relatives, they had friends there, in whom they felt perfect confidence. Madame de Pourtalès, trustful and optimistic, rested in this belief. She never attempted to conceal her weakness for German merit and virtue. In Paris she would have sworn to the friendliness and perfect disposition of their German neighbours. Whenever she touched upon the subject, she vaunted, in all simplicity, her admiration for Bismarck and William, at the risk of irritating what she considered the excessive susceptibility of the French; so much so, indeed, that some people in Berlin quite expected to see her Alsatian sympathies lead her ultimately back to the German fold. It was here that a great surprise was in store for her.

Von Schleinitz, then the leading minister, invited the Count and Countess de Pourtalès to dinner. The lady had been placed on the right hand of the statesman, who, quite aware of the private views of his guests, began to talk to Madame de Pourtalès of the progress of Prussia, the growth of Germany, and the position she would

THE MARCHIONESS DE GALLIFET

shortly take up in the world. She listened silently. Then Von Schleinitz began to propound those views as to territorial expansion which were well known to the German staff, but respecting which they were so badly informed at the Palais d'Orsay.

"Very soon, fair Countess," he continued in his most ingratiating tones, "you will belong entirely to us."

She raised her head, troubled and agitated, while Von Schleinitz, carried away by his subject, concluded in these words:—

"Alsace will shortly become one of the finest provinces of Germany, and as for you, Countess, we shall be proud to reckon you amongst our compatriots."

"But I am Alsatian," she replied, "I am French, and very French, believe me."

The Prussian Excellency realized that he had gone too far. The subject was not touched upon again.

The blow, however, had told. The projects, manifestly hostile, which were entertained by Prussia had been revealed. She now recalled certain words spoken by her friends the Metternichs, to which she had paid little attention at the time, respecting the unsettled, involved, and perilous policy of the Imperial Cabinet.

Already in their garrison towns Prussian officers were marking the routes and halting-places of their troops upon the map of France. In Berlin every one was talking in a tone of perfect confidence of the great destiny which awaited Prussia, and of all which Germany expected from her in the future. Meanwhile the crowned dreamer who presided over the destinies of France, confident in himself and his diplomacy, continued to pursue the chimera of an alliance, both necessary and profitable, with the heirs of Frederick the Great.

At Biarritz, Bismarck had, in fact, entertained for a moment the proposed Franco-German *entente*. In so doing, he believed himself to be dealing with statesmen,

and had acted accordingly. It was not long, however, before he discovered his mistake; he found he could take his time, promise everything, give nothing, and mask his batteries.[1]

The train needed only a spark to explode it. Neither the threatening aspect of foreign affairs, the disorganization at home, nor the general feeling of anxiety could disturb the peaceful somnolence of Napoleon III, or the supine confidence of his courtiers and ministers.[2] The ink was still wet on the pen with which the Marquis de La Valette had signed this famous circular:—

"France can but rejoice at the growth of Prussia, which she has always desired, and towards which she has lent her assistance."

"Three people," said Alfred Mezières to me, "saw clearly what was coming before 1870: Lieutenant-Colonel Stoffel, General Ducrot, and Madame de Pourtalès." In reality they were not alone, and without enumerating the prophets of the morrow, we might point out several others, even in the Emperor's circle, such as the Duc de Persigny, who did not wait for the storm to proclaim its coming. These three, however, sounded the alarm louder than the rest, but just as ineffectually.

It was at this juncture that Ducrot's letter to General Frossard was intercepted—the historic epistle of October 28, 1868, which was found again in 1870 amongst the *Papiers des Tuileries*—in which he emphasized with all his soldierly energy the importance of the revelations made to him by a lady of position.

[1] Even before 1860, the object pursued by Bismarck, the goal which occupied his mind and stimulated his efforts, was plainly visible, namely, the unity of Germany, a war with Austria, and foreign alliances which should strengthen his hands to accomplish his designs. See the *Correspondence of Bismarck with Baron von Schleinitz*, Cotta, Stuttgart.

[2] Exception must be made in the case of Marshal Niel, who was overtaken by death in the midst of his labours for the reorganization of the French army.

Indeed, on her return from Germany, passing through Strasburg, she desired to inform General Ducrot of her patriotic fears, in order that others might be warned in time. She was carrying home a death-blow, she told him. War was inevitable; it would break out on the first excuse; for the Prussians wanted it, and were so skilfully and completely prepared that they had no doubt of the issue.

"Why, you are blowing Bellona's trumpet," he replied, with an affectation of irony, "when we are hearing on all sides of the pacific intentions of our excellent neighbours, the salutary terror we inspire, and Bismarck's anxiety to avoid every pretext for conflict; when we are sending the troops back to their homes; so much so that we are even thinking of reducing our staff, and I am prepared to go home and plant cabbages in Nivernais!"

"Oh, General, that is the most terrible part of it. Those people are deceiving us grossly, and they hope to take us by surprise, and unprepared. Orders have gone forth. In public they talk of peace and their wish to live on good terms with us; but if you converse in private with those who are about the person of the King, they look slyly at you and say: 'Do you really believe all that? Do you not see that events are moving quickly and nothing can avert the catastrophe?'

"They laugh at our Government, our army, the Emperor, the Empress, and go so far as to pretend that France will soon become a second Spain. Can you believe that the Minister of the King's Household dared to tell me that within eighteen months Alsace would be in the hands of Prussia? And if you only knew the vast preparations they are making in all directions; how diligently they are labouring to transform and combine the forces of the states recently annexed, and the confidence that exists in all ranks of society and in the army. Oh! General, I have indeed returned heart-broken, full of fear

and grief. I am certain now that nothing can prevent this war, and what a war it will be!"

In France, Madame de Pourtalès' words sounded like a prophecy; in Germany they would have seemed merely the statement of a fact about to be accomplished, and already almost realized in the mind of the Prussians. Some time previously, General Blumenthal had gone to England on a visit to Lord Albemarle in Norfolk; that nobleman expressed a desire to go to Berlin in order to witness the military manœuvres.

"You need not take the trouble," replied the Brandenburger; "we shall soon be giving you a grand review on the Champ de Mars in Paris."

All that she had said at Strasburg under the influence of her melancholy convictions, she repeated at Compiègne. She opened her heart on the subject to the Emperor, who invited her to his table and seated her at his side. He listened to her alarming account with the silent, sceptical air of the strong and fearless man.

"Those pretty blue eyes of yours, Countess," he replied at last, "saw many things through the prism of your imagination which do not exist; believe me, we have nothing to fear from Prussia; she will never dare to attack us."

Then he gave her reasons which seemed to him unanswerable. All further comment on the incident came to a standstill. The blame was easily thrown on Ducrot, an alarmist, "who saw Prussians everywhere," and it was added that it was waste of time to listen to a good-looking woman who knew nothing of politics.

The inevitable happened. Strange coincidence! At the very moment when war was declared, and the Emperor was prepared to place himself at the head of his troops, it was discovered in Paris that a lady, on an intimate footing at Court, and related to Napoleon, had seen no harm—notwithstanding her devotion to the Imperial Family and

her duty to her country—in carrying on a regular correspondence with some of the princes of the Royal Family of Prussia and with the officers commanding the German army. Madame de Pourtalès knew nothing of these transactions. Those sentiments of uprightness, patriotism, and humanity which flow straight from the heart in such critical moments were displayed by all belonging to her. Her father, the Baron de Bussière, was taken prisoner by the Prussians at Radstadt, after the destruction of the castle of Robertsau, which he had converted into a field hospital. Her sister, the Countess de Leusse, and her brother-in-law the mayor of Reichshoffen, ex-deputy of the Lower Rhine, devoted themselves to ameliorating the lot of both combatants and wounded. Finally, she herself took a large share in the work of self-denial and devotion shown by all the leading Alsatian families.

This it was that inspired the artists of the day to depict her in the dress of the Alsatian peasant, and as Alsace herself, weeping for her lost fatherland. A presentment of blonde beauty, her long plaits tied with a black ribbon, she symbolized so well the public feeling in those days of mourning, that after the war the picture was reproduced by every method known to graphic art. While wreaths and bouquets were heaped round the statue of Strasburg in the Place de la Concorde, all the shop windows of Paris exhibited the anonymous portrait of the beautiful Countess in her Alsatian head-dress.

Madame de Pourtalès continued to feel an affectionate loyalty for the fallen sovereigns. It was in her power to give material proof of this.

At the outset, the financial situation of the guests at Chislehurst was exceedingly precarious and difficult. With that imperturbable faith in his star which prevented his foreseeing the possibility of a supreme disaster, Napoleon III had never actually taken the precaution, of which he was accused, of amassing considerable funds of

money abroad. All his jewels and personal property, left at the Tuileries in the haste of departure or flight, had since been confiscated. Until 1874 he had to rely wholly on the devotion of his intimate circle. One of the Empress's friends, bearing a name celebrated in literature, Madame Octave Feuillet, gave me some details of those days which appear almost incredible. Who could have imagined the ex-Empress, the resplendent Eugénie, forced to economize in the little things of daily life, to look to the expenses of her table, of lighting and of lamp oil? This was merely temporary. There was soon a return to the days of plenty, when she drew from her properties in France, and especially in Spain, sufficient to re-establish her household in opulent security—an opulence which it must be confessed she employed with a discretion bordering on parsimony.

At all events things were at their worst when in 1873 the Countess de Pourtalès came on a visit to Chislehurst. She saw with her own eyes the straitened means of the Imperial Family, which were hardly suspected by outsiders. She had but one thought: to return as quickly as possible to Paris and to intercede on their behalf with Thiers, the Chief of the Executive, to explain to him the actual position of those whose imprudence had cost the country so dear, but who had been so severely punished in their turn, and to solicit, as an act of justice, the restitution of their personal effects, their gifts and souvenirs. Apart from the reasons urged upon him in support of the equity of this measure, Thiers was not insensible to feminine wiles combined with aristocratic elegance. We may venture to remark that, generally speaking, he enjoyed the conversation and society of women. Countess Le Hon, the Duchess Colonna, Countess Walewska, to quote only a few distinguished personalities, found him an amiable and attentive guest in their salons. In the days of the Empire he had been on friendly terms with the Count and Countess de

Pourtalès. Now, most opportunely, he remembered the fact. Countess Mélanie's intercession was not in vain. Madame de Pourtalès obtained much, and well-filled packing-cases were despatched to Chislehurst which would never have found their way thither but for the energetic measures she adopted with the officials whose duty it was to liquidate the Imperial effects.

These Bonapartist ties have remained very precious to her. Not that she has devoted herself exclusively to them. Even under the Empire her roving nature led her to cultivate circles tinged at least with Opposition tendencies, attracted thither by personal sympathies of intellect and temperament. At one time her political audacity caused some comment. Afterwards she applied her taste and discernment to conciliating personalities and opinions, holding gatherings in which the worldly element prevailed ; that is to say, a somewhat useless preoccupation with birth and rank, while art and literature, although not actually neglected, never obtained free access as in the salon of Princess Mathilde.

In her sphere of society Countess de Pourtalès enjoys unquestionable prestige. The elect never fail to attend her parties in the great Red Room, so often described, where canvases by Bronzino, Rembrandt, and Van Dyck hang side by side with masterpieces of modern art. Personages from various foreign courts muster in her house in such force that, to quote an eye-witness, it is astonishing to see how fertile the kingdoms of Europe are in princes and princesses.

With her more intimate friends, Madame de Pourtalès willingly recalls the men and women of that generation which flourished triumphantly, with much spirit—if also with a grain of folly—during the best years of the Second Empire. The echo of one such familiar conversation has reached our ears. It took place at a dinner-party given by the Marquis de Breteuil. The talk turned

upon men and matters of the past. She was relating in a clear and interesting way anecdotes about persons and events. The chief topic was Madame de Castiglione. An article over my signature had appeared the same evening in one of the leading newspapers and recalled to mind that original personality.[1]

"La Castiglione," said Madame de Pourtalès. "You want to know whom she resembled? Well, she was like Madame de Janzé."[2]

Turning to Admiral Duperré, she asked—

"Do you not agree, Admiral?"

"Just so—beautiful and cold."

"Yes, very beautiful, but perfectly intolerable."

Then, enumerating some of the lady's thousand and one singularities, she recalled the famous evening of the Living Pictures at the Hôtel Meyendorff, when, to the surprise of her friends, Madame de Castiglione, who might well have been expected to choose a less austere disguise, appeared as a Capuchin nun, her brow covered with a linen band, and her figure concealed from head to foot in folds of grey homespun; and how she had vanished, refusing to return, in spite of the entreaties of the spectators. What a contradiction! An angel of purity and beauty! The story was piquant. The guests laughed heartily. Then each had a word to say about the Florentine Countess. Monsieur de Montesquiou declared himself a passionate admirer of hers, and that he possessed relics, pieces of furniture, papers, and a score of her portraits. Monsieur Gabriel Hanotaux described the treasures he had discovered in the Castiglione's library and correspondence. But the point that seemed the strangest to those present was to hear "the divine Nicchia" spoken

[1] The *Temps*, January 16, 1905.

[2] The likeness is doubtful. One can hardly discover any physical resemblance. With more reason the Empress has been compared with the Vicomtesse de Janzé as regards outward aspect.

MÉLANIE DE BUSSIÈRE, COUNTESS DE POURTALÈS, AT THE TIME OF HER MARRIAGE

(From the painting by Winterhalter)

of in such terms by Madame de Pourtalès, who alone perhaps in the Court of Napoleon III could be said to surpass her in beauty. For, notwithstanding the repellent and scornful airs habitual to the cousin of Cavour, no one could deny the dazzling truth. "There are not two Castigliones," the Countess de La Poèze once said to me in a burst of sincerity. But how different were the last years of the two women.

Madame de Pourtalès was one of the fortunate few in that brilliant circle who by reason of an independent state was unaffected by the shock of the catastrophe. The overthrow of the Empire and the disasters that fell upon the nation destroyed many illusions, dispelled many hopes, and ruined many prosperous fortunes; and that at the age when to begin again is too heavy a task and too hard a problem. Although she did not escape with a mere change of scene, like Madame de Metternich, yet the downfall only dealt her a slight moral shock, easy to bear and in no way affecting her worldly position.

There was no need to change her luxurious mode of living nor her large independence. She has continued to entertain in Paris or to hunt in Robertsau, to be a conspicuous figure, surrounded by her sons, the Counts Jacques, Paul, and Hubert de Pourtalès, and her daughters, the Baroness de Berckheim and the Marquise de Loys-Chandieu. She corresponds assiduously with many friends, extends her patronage to charitable works, has a wide and select acquaintance, and still plays her part in a wealthy and aristocratic setting.

The grief which follows upon the heels of disaster, the sense of abandonment, the cruel experience of ingratitude, the sorrow of loneliness, after having seen all Paris at her feet—all these great trials which have befallen others, and one in particular, have been spared Madame de Pourtalès.

She enjoys another still rarer privilege: the winter of life has come upon her with infinite clemency. Her smile is almost unchanged. There are some roses which fall only leaf by leaf. When Fortuna first came to her in the dawn of life, bringing a radiant band in her train, the capricious goddess tarried long with her favourite before she returned to her Wheel.

CHAPTER XI

A FORGOTTEN FEW

Slight sketches—Anna Murat, Duchesse de Mouchy—Madame de Montebello—Vicomtesse Aguado, Marquise de Las Marismas—Marshal Magnan's daughters; an *enfant terrible*—In the Empress's Blue Room—The Duchesse de Morny—Sophia de la Paniéga and the matrimonial romance of Marshal Pélissier, Duc de Malakoff—A superior soul: "Marcello" the fashionable sculptress—The confidential papers of the Duchesse de Colonna—Countess Mercy-Argenteau—A legendary beauty; splendour and great fall—Further names and souvenirs—More to follow.

WHILE entirely occupied in ordering and completing so many personal reminiscences which by good fortune have fallen into our hands through correspondence or conversation, we have covered a number of pages and piled up sheet upon sheet. Almost imperceptibly we have put together a fair-sized volume. Yet, looking round us, we still see many empty frames. Not a word has been said of this or that personality, and many fascinating or original figures are still lacking to our portrait gallery.

On this great stage of ambition, amusement, and intrigue—Paris under the Second Empire—other women went and came to whom was attached—like the rest—some interest, some life-story, short or long as the case may be, which would lead us far afield amid curious reminiscences. But space is limited, and time passes. It is regrettable.

Sketches taken in haste, as the doors of some salon are flung wide for a moment, glimpses caught in passing of some discreet boudoir, would suffice to recall the name,

the likeness, and the existence of more than one charming, but forgotten, woman.

We should need the light caressing touches of a pastellist in order to depict the dazzling fairness of Princess Anna Murat, Duchesse de Mouchy, the Empress's one acknowledged and inseparable friend, with her delicate features, sparkling eyes, and golden hair adorned with diamond marguerites, less brilliant than the freshness of her complexion.

We ought at least to give some idea of the touching charm of Marshal Canrobert's wife, and find room for a few words which might serve as an inscription for one of Cabanel's portraits: that superb work which he dedicated to the youth of Madame Carette, reader and historian to the Empress.

The intelligent eyes of Madame de Montebello need detain us but a moment. Of Vicomtesse Aguado, Marquise de Las Marismas, we might have found more to say. She was one of those who love to listen to their own reminiscences. For years her house in the Rue de l'Elysée had been the favourite rendezvous of the foreign aristocracy and the Court circle. After the war, she led a sequestered life, darkened by a succession of losses, and especially by the death of her daughter, the young Duchesse de Montmorency. But if in her lonely old age she could not make up her mind to take her share of fresh distraction, she did not resign herself to a rule of silence. She had so much to say about all she had seen and heard in those lurid hours of the past!

. . . . . .

A glance would probably suffice for the pleasant profile of Valentine Haussmann, for the haunting image of Madame de Pomeyrac, or the triptych of Marshal Magnan's daughters, pausing before it just long enough to pick up one little story. Why not enjoy it all the same?

ANNA MURAT, DUCHESS DE MOUCHY

The prettiest of the three girls, as graceful as a Dresden china figure, was of invaluable assistance in the *tableaux vivants* and charades given by the smart set at Compiègne. She was once implored to appear as Eros, the naughty little deity with his bow and quiver, from whose shafts none can hope to escape, either on earth or upon the heights of Olympus. She accepted, though somewhat in doubt as to the choice of costume. Accordingly, in all innocence, she wrote a line to the author of her being:—

"My dear father, I am playing Love to-night (*je fais l'amour ce soir*). Please send me everything I shall want for the part."

Even at this distance of time I still seem to hear the old soldier's guffaw of amusement!

We might linger pleasantly enough in the Empress's Blue Salon at the Tuileries, admiring the exquisite collection of miniatures and recalling to imagination and memory the women who, to please the Empress, sat for this series of portraits, each one representing by her costume one of the great nations of Europe. Amongst others is the Duchesse de Morny, whose name alone serves to remind us of many piquant details respecting her marriage with the French ambassador to St. Petersburg; with many other reminiscences of her originality, her devoted love for her inconstant husband, her confidence betrayed, her despair at his death, when she cried aloud to be laid alive in his tomb; the sacrifice of her glorious fair hair, and her subsequent renunciation of the world; finally, of the unfortunate revelations contained in his casket of souvenirs, and the indiscreet confidences of her friends, by which she learnt how many passions can dwell in a single heart; followed by swift reaction, prompt consolation, and her subsequent revulsion of feeling, and haste to relight the torches of Hymen. Over the doors of the famous Blue Salon hung captivating portraits of Madame Walewska, the Duchesse Marie de Cadore, and Sophie de

la Paniéga, Duchesse de Malakoff. One of the purest types of Andalusian beauty, wearing the traditional mantilla and in her hair the purple flower of the women of Granada, we might have given more than a passing mention to the picture of Sophie de la Paniéga, although Madame Louise de Malakoff (now Princesse de Zamoïska), with excessive filial piety, intimated to us a desire which was practically a command: not to touch upon this subject.

Niece of the Countess de Montijo, among the friends of Eugénie's youth the Duchesse de Malakoff was the only one who became united to France by a brilliant marriage. This marriage, which was one of reason rather than of affection, was arranged by the Empress herself. Having lived her own fairy tale, and realizing the impossibility of sentimental adventures for one in her position, Eugénie took pleasure in making matches for those around her and helping to make fast the bonds of Hymen.

A flexible waist and velvety eyes, dark and bright as black diamonds, these perishable charms constituted all the dowry of Sophie de Paniéga. In the depths of her heart she had nursed the sweetness of a dream destined never to be realized. A secret sorrow darkened her brightest social pleasures. The futile compliments and vain homage she met on her way through the world failed to remove her sense of bitter disenchantment, and although she made no revelations, the cause of her sadness was not difficult to guess.

"What is the use of being pretty?" she said to one of her friends, in a voice of penetrating sadness. "I am so unhappy that I should be glad to die!"

Whilst she gave way to brooding melancholy, the Empress was looking about for a suitable match for her. She confided in the Countess Walewska and turned to her for help.

The Spanish girl's heartache passed away in time; but it was not destined to be cured by the passion which inspired it. She became the wife of a marshal of France, and bore the title of Duchesse de Malakoff. A fine title, as the Countess de la Pagerie slyly remarked, if only it had not entailed a marriage with Marshal Pélissier. He was in turn ambassador to England and Governor-General of Algeria. He attained the highest military rank; but there was a lack of polish in this living illustration of the battlefield. He was not exemplary as regards urbanity or charm of conversation. Externally he was rough, and no longer young.

While winter hoar frosts were whitening the head of the victor of Sebastopol, some kind-hearted souls undertook to bring back the springtide to his heart. The preliminaries of this happy transformation were as follows. In August, 1855, the sovereigns went to Cherbourg to receive the Queen of England. Pélissier, recently appointed minister to London, accompanied the Emperor. In the Empress's suite, accompanying the Countess de Montijo, whom she rarely left, Mademoiselle de la Paniéga was a noticeable figure. A Te Deum was sung in the cathedral; Mademoiselle de la Paniéga knelt, Spanish fashion, on the stone floor of the building, and the elegant curves of her figure impressed the old soldier as much as her devout attitude. He inquired the name of the beautiful and pious girl. Madame Walewska obligingly gave him the information, adding, "Marshal, that is the girl you ought to marry." Having flung her shaft, she left him to his meditations, first giving him to understand that the ball to be held that evening at the Prefecture would offer a favourable opportunity for an introduction.

He came in full-dress uniform, his breast covered with crosses and sparkling orders. Glancing round the room he recognized Mademoiselle de la Paniéga, dressed all in white, and wearing nothing more valuable in the way of

jewellery than a pink coral necklace. Although less at ease in a ballroom than on horseback, Pélissier was not more backward at the dance than under fire. He begged to put his name down on her programme for a valse; she agreed with less eagerness than deference. The very next day the Marshal made his proposal to the Empress, who informed Sophia at once. She interrogated her own feelings with some hesitation. The Marshal's age—he was sixty-five, and she but five-and-twenty. His appearance—he was short, fat, and had lost his waist; she tall and slim. His temper—people said he was hasty and violent; she was gentle and sensitive. Less than this would have warranted an uncertain reply. Yet, to be a duchess, a marshal's wife! Such considerations were not without weight. In the end she yielded, and the engagement was announced forthwith.

The Marshal lavished attentions and visits on her. He gave the Countess Walewska an account of his courtship from day to day, and long afterwards I saw in her possession letters from this Marshal of France, describing in detail every phase of his conjugal romance. It was hard work at first, to judge from this sentence, taken from a letter written on August 13, 1858:—

"The lovely Sophie was sweet and gentle, a little depressed but altogether worthy."

There is here, as we see, a suspicion of resignation. Gradually sentiment grew warmer. Pélissier was a conscientious lover, bringing presents and flowers, without showing himself too impatient to reach the simple and desired goal of marriage. Considering it a mistake to dash headlong into any enterprise (one wonders whether he would have thought or acted in the same way thirty years earlier), and that the wisest plan is to walk warily, he checked and moderated, rather than incited, the zeal of those who took an interest in his happiness. "The dear

THE COUNTESS REGNARDE

Empress" almost makes him nervous by her desire to bring off their wedding by steam.

At last the date of the ceremony was fixed.

"I could wait another six weeks," he wrote, "for a wreath of flowers to be bound with a handful of laurels."

And he emphasizes with a slightly Prudhommesque remark his self-satisfaction at this serenely expectant attitude.

"You see," he writes, "that I have myself well in hand. By the unremitting favour of Heaven I invariably find my calmness increase in proportion to the gravity of the circumstances."

With this he closes his letter, slipping in a compliment which carried an odour of *poudre à la maréchale*:—

"Adieu; I kiss your hands and ask only one of those smiles which you *angelicize* without effort."

Nevertheless, thanks to her gentle and affectionate nature, Mademoiselle de la Paniéga became so evidently attached to her future husband as to make him believe she was really in love with him and that he was necessary to her happiness.

"If," he writes to Madame Walewska, "I had not a benevolent vampire who counts the hours, and considers as a theft those which are not spent at Her side, or in Her service, I should rush to Vichy to kiss your hands."

All the rest of this correspondence is devoted to the ruinous trifles of the trousseau. Madame Walewska, who undertook the business for him, carried it out with a profusion which the Marshal, had he dared to express himself clearly, would have liked to temper with economy. He was able to deduce from the total of the bill that she had omitted nothing; sumptuous furs, silky cashmeres, rich velvets, dresses to succeed the muslins and laces of early married days. The visits to the jewellers were left to him.

He had had but few occasions to make presents of jewellery in the course of his martial career. This is evident from his alarm at the prices of the articles. Two *rivières* of diamonds! One would suffice to drown oneself in. Then she must have a duchess's coronet: surely the Emperor who made him, Pélissier, a duke ought to add the diadem to the patent of nobility. He heaps blessings on the kind Countess who has taken so much trouble to ensure his own future happiness and the present satisfaction of his *promised bride*, as he calls her in his soldierly style. But one feels that he would not be sorry to hear that there was not a single item more needed for the trousseau and that there was nothing left to be done but to sign the contract and go to church.

"*October* 7, 1858.

"We seem to be playing at shadow pictures. We see each other without exchanging a word, without pausing, and each in a greater hurry than the other. You disappear altogether. The sum total of the trousseau alone takes shape and solidity; but they say that wounds caused by money are not fatal, and I love my wife too well to be vexed at an ever-growing bill."

As a matter of fact, the Countess, anxious to do things handsomely, had, like all ministers, been compelled to have recourse to supplementary credit.

The marriage took place in the evening in the Chapel of Saint Cloud. The whole of the Court was present. Shortly afterwards the Duke and Duchess started for their quarters at Blackwall in England. They made the journey by stages, "running," said he, "and then crawling," finally coming to a stop, filled with the hope of prolonged happiness.

"*November* 3.

"This companion of man, who is the ornament of our existence, could not be more to my taste, and I find in her all the elements of happiness. If she does not mutiny,

she will be a perfect wife; and this she will be, for she is good, amiably intelligent, and has a pious admiration for her husband."

The entire character of the soldier appears in those last lines; they show him as he was by nature, imperious and an uncompromising disciplinarian, even in his home, besides being well satisfied with his own merits.

One daughter was born to them. The Marshal, martinet as he was, was now completely subjugated in his turn by this child, who gladdened his declining years. Before she was three, her father, Commander-in-Chief of the army and Governor of the finest colony of France, said of her—

"Louise de Malakoff governs Algeria, for she rules her father."

She had a lively intelligence and already a somewhat difficult temper. He recognized himself in her.

The life of Eugénie de Montijo's cousin both as wife and mother was simple and smooth. She would have been merely a pretty woman lost among a crowd of others, but for the circumstances which made her Marshal Pélissier's wife.

. . . . . .

The Duchess Colonna, the fashionable sculptress Marcello, deserves more than a page of anecdotes such as has just amused us *à propos* of a fashionable wedding. It would not be too much to devote to her a long and close study, an individual analysis, for she was essentially a character, an artistic force.

About the year 1865 "Marcello" was rarely absent from any salon of note. A contemporary witness declares that the figure of the Italian Duchess was to be seen at every ministerial reception, in every ballroom in aristocratic Paris, at every party given by Thiers, the former President of the Council under the ex-Citizen King. At first sight the impression she produced was not one of

striking beauty. Her face might indeed be said to lack relief, her glance was not always lighted by the flame of her soul, and her features were by no means irreproachable. More definitely attractive was the effect of her beautiful light chestnut hair, gathered on the top of her head and tied by a ribbon; and of her queenly gait, her tall, slim figure, and the flexible grace of her every movement. She dressed very simply as a rule; her favourite ornament was a gold chain given her by the Empress Elizabeth. When going to the Tuileries she usually wore either black satin or purple silk, relieved by rich laces; her lovely neck and dazzlingly white shoulders rose becomingly as from a white filmy cloud. Those who watched her moving through the galleries, with her graceful, even step, were reminded of some goddess of antiquity returned from the shores of Ionia. But she possessed something better than these fleeting charms. She had a mind, and we may get to know it by glancing through some private pages she left behind her, which have been jealously guarded by her family.[1]

Adèle d'Affrey, Duchesse Colonna de Castiglione, was of Swiss origin. The Friburg Alps and the softly rounded hills of the sunny South formed alternately the happy setting for her earliest dreams. Her father and mother, both highly cultured, were great travellers, who sought to understand and interpret all they saw. Going to and fro between Switzerland and Italy, from balmy summers to azure winters, it seemed to her that she possessed two countries. "My heart beats as fast at sight of an olive tree as at that of our pine forests," she wrote in the opening chapters of her *Confidences*, a work which has never been published. The hills of Florence, the marbles of

[1] It is to some private letters of Mademoiselle Yvonne de Romain, full of sympathetic emotion and eloquence, and to the communications of "Marcello's" sister, the Baroness d'Ottenfels—a delicate, sentimental poetess—that we owe the light we are able to throw on the temperament of the Duchess Colonna.

ADÈLE D'AFFREY, DUCHESS COLONNA DE CASTIGLIONE

Rome, and the palaces of Venice aroused her enthusiasm, just as later they were destined to arouse the consciousness of her artistic vocation. In the same way the rugged North touched the wild and proud side of her character.

Whilst still a child, she was possessed with a desire for action. She longed to enact dreams as vast as the world, to realize glory as lofty and pure as the heavens, at once, and without even completing her education. In her fifteenth year she saw beauty and nobility everywhere! It seemed to her that it would be supreme bliss to devote herself to some great idea, however obscure and poorly rewarded her devotion might be. One day, under the oaks in the park of Grivisiez, she knelt and uttered this prayer :—

"Lord, give me some distinguished task, some perilous mission crowned by victory or death; give me strength and courage to perform it, and take in exchange whatever share of happiness may be destined for me in this world."

Alas! life in its cruelty was soon to grant this petition, vibrating with the arrogance of youth, and the woman too often found occasion to remember the prayer of her childhood.

The independence and somewhat haughty spirit which always characterized her was already making itself felt. The yoke of her teachers was an unbearable restraint. To be free and independent, this was her cherished aspiration. She was irresistibly attracted towards antiquity, and her craving for knowledge amounted to an intellectual fever. Hasty readings, a natural gift of observation, and rapid intuition, which revealed to her the sense of the beautiful, sufficed to prepare her mind.

"To know. I wanted to know. This seemed to me as much a duty as an instinct, or a need, of the intellect."

After such ardent development of her vital forces, she was naturally moved to project her *ego* for the sake of

others. She went through a phase of altruism. The enthusiastic young girl dreamed of becoming a pure religious spirit, thinking and striving only to immolate herself. Some hidden force held her back; she had too much individuality, too much vital warmth, to accept the semi-death of sacrifice.

Philanthrophic ideas gave place to more sentimental impressions. This was in 1856. Fascinated by the prestige of a great Italian name, Adèle d'Affrey, by the advice of her mother, accepted the hand of Don Carlo Colonna, Duc de Castiglione. Their union was brief. He died after a few months of married life. Her private letters at this time reveal a despairing woman, living on tears and refusing to be comforted. There was a certain amount of imagination in this grief. The moment would come when "Marcello's" vocation would be opened up to her and absorb her entirely.

She was languishing in Rome, in solitude and mourning, when the sight of a collection of statues in the Villa de Medici marked the point of departure for a new life. These statues, destined for one of the King of Bavaria's museums, became the consolation of the Duchess during those hours of seclusion. Every day she made a point of going to gaze at them across the green hedge and through the wide bay-windows which, left partially open, afforded her a glimpse of those dazzling nude figures. She vowed that by dint of work and effort she would attain to the highest joys of art. She began her studies in Rome, and continued them in Paris under Regnault and Carpeaux. From this period her true life begins, under the name of "Marcello," which she adopted and exalted far above the title of duchess, holding in greater honour than all conventional distinctions—

"*L'auréole du nom qu'on se fait soi-même.*"

When winter approached she settled in Paris in the Rue Bayard, Cours la Reine, in the same house as Eugène Delacroix. Her days were taken up by long and patient study. To perfect herself in anatomy she frequented the Dupuytren Museum disguised as a man, so as to escape attention, to which, as a woman, she might have been exposed. Admitted as a student, she mingled with the crowd of young doctors, none of whom ever penetrated her disguise. She accustomed herself to the terrible spectacle of death. During her anatomical course she took impressions in wax from the "subjects," reproducing the form or position of a limb, studying the points of intersection of the muscles, the action of the sinews, and bringing her beautiful hands into disagreeable contact with ice-cold flesh. Her talent rapidly developed, and began to show itself in works which crystallized all her special attributes: dash, originality, and pride. Some of her statues, especially the tragic figure and agonized gesture of the "Pythia," produced a great impression.

Celebrity soon overtook her. She now allowed herself more leisure for visiting and studying the world to which her rank and family connexions admitted her. The notes —unhappily all too brief—which have been preserved amongst the Duchess Colonna's papers at Breitfeld, reveal her sentiments about the society she frequented, but did not respect, and to which she alludes as "worm-eaten." Her candid soul was astonished and grieved to see the petty rivalries which existed in these restricted circles, where the loftiest minds were victims of party spirit. Every day increased the distance not only between herself and the official circles of the Second Empire, but also between the Opposition salons of the Faubourg, because in neither, beneath the misleading mask which passes for respect for the proprieties, could she discover sincerity, spontaneity, or youth. The moral element, that of pure women and upright, intelligent men possessed of the love

of virtue, was absent. When Marcello, captivated by the gracious advances of the Empress, went to the Tuileries, she found it difficult to conceal her disenchantment.

"I thought," she said on her return, "that I was in a theatre, not amid real life. Every one seemed to be reciting a part, careful not to change a word of it. . . . My own kin, where were they? I have discovered them since; they are the men of worth and power, who unite warmth of imagination to indefatigable industry."

The men of whom she speaks, her friends, her constant companions, were Thiers, Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, Mignet, Gratry, and her masters Regnault and Carpeaux. She often went to spend two or three days with the Thiers family, where she met Cousin and Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire. Those restful moments counted among the best of her life. She liked to recall in conversation with what heat and spirit Thiers and Cousin cut and thrust at one another on the subject of the seventeenth century, and how every Sunday they reopened their eternal discussions about the men and events of those distant days. During the week, one or other would call on Marcello, almost daily, to take her to the Observatory, or to some museum or library, where together they would turn the pages of some precious book and resuscitate the soul of the manuscripts.

In spite of her preference for privacy, the Duchess Colonna fulfilled her obligation to appear at some of the leading houses in Paris. She was a regular attendant at the Duchesse de Galliéra's Mondays. She was to be met at the receptions of the Duchess Pozzo di Borgo. The salon of the Countess de Circourt, where she was presented to Humboldt, Cavour, and Bismarck, interested her keenly by its cosmopolitan diversity. The most widely divergent types were present at these heterogeneous gatherings which Thiers wittily dubbed the "Salon d'Acclimatation." She held her own with great skill and

MADAME DE POMEYRAC

tact on this borderland of extreme views, showing the same conciliatory manner to all, neither proclaiming for nor against the Opposition, although she had long postponed her appearance at Court. There were those who secretly reproached her with a kind of eclectic indifference. They charged her with being equally cordial to persons entirely opposed in character, position, and opinions; she frequented too many camps for her loyalty to be above suspicion. To please all one must be unfaithful to some, they argued. But she saw with other eyes.

At one time her friend Thiers entertained the idea of organizing at her house a small group hostile to the Empire. But in her position as a foreigner the Duchess Colonna formally declined to adopt any definite political attitude. She was the less inclined to change her determination, because the rôle of mouthpiece or incense-burner to some great man, the only part possible at that time for a woman, appeared to her far too narrow and cramping.

"I wanted to acquire a real value myself," she wrote. "My tastes were anything but political. Besides, shall I confess it? I had a proud spirit and desired nothing from others, wishing only for those hidden treasures, too little sought by humanity in general. . . . It is certain that if I had cared to make myself of importance I could then have done so and created a salon. . . . But what is a fashionable salon but a gilded cage? The vast problems and serious questions which engross humanity are discussed elsewhere."

These great questions were freely touched upon in her presence when she entertained in her atelier. Her guests were numerous and of all parties. At these unconventional gatherings she was perfect. With a pleasant word and smile for the humblest of her guests, she moved among the groups, setting the conversation going with a word,

and excelling more especially in bringing out the most backward, while sparing no pains to ensure the enjoyment of all.

The rest of her time she spent in sculpture, leaving in marble her thoughts and inspirations. The labour exhausted her delicate constitution; the ardent soul which wanted everything at once, lived too hard, gave too much, felt too much, burst its bonds of flesh. Marcello died in 1879 at Castellammare, the chisel still in her hand, unyielding to the last moment, using all the strength left to her to console those around her for the inevitable. When at last those clear eyes which had seen so many visions were closed, and all the beauty of divine art was finished for her, her mother took her body back to Grivisiez, there to sleep the eternal sleep.

. . . . . .

Far more chequered was the destiny of the regally beautiful Countess de Mercy-Argenteau, *née* Louise de Caraman-Chimay.[1] The blood of Madame Tallien was in her veins. She belonged to that Chimay family whose women with their love of adventure have worked such strange havoc.[2]

We see her in imagination just as Cabanel painted her, at the climax of her triumphant youth, in a dark velvet dress which enhances the whiteness of her arms and shoulders, with her fascinating eyes and seductive mouth, her magic smile, and the subtle combination of uncon-

[1] Only the eldest daughters of the eldest sons in the Chimay family bear the title of princess; the others are all countesses of Caraman-Chimay. Madame de Mercy-Argenteau's sister was the Princess Constantine Czartoryska.

[2] Without going any further back, Alphonse de Chimay, her brother, and the wealthy Brussels heiress, Mademoiselle Lejeune, afterwards princess of Chimay; the events that morally alienated these two, and the audacious elopement from under the very conjugal roof; the agitation made by Princess de Chimay, née Mademoiselle Lejeune, to procure from the Court of Rome the annulment of her marriage, and at the same time secure

straint and pride which made her irresistible. She dominated men with indisputable power. An accomplished musician, her virtuosity as an interpreter of Liszt or Chopin seemed a supplementary gift by which she called in the aid of art to add lustre to her feminine triumphs. No sooner did her fingers touch the keys, than she was surrounded by a swarm of admirers who gazed upon her every movement.

There are women who are pretty without knowing it; this was the charm of the Marquise de la Bédoyère. Others, like Madame de Castiglione and Madame de Mercy-Argenteau, are so gifted by nature that they insensibly acquire the superb consciousness of beauty incarnated in themselves. The way she carried her head, her walk, her whole personality, all expressed this serene conviction. To see her enter a room was to realize at a glance how highly she prized her own gifts. Knowing that she was beautiful and desirable, she posed as an idol; but an idol with a very clear appreciation of its own value. Far from romantic, and indifferent to sentimentality, the only men on whom she looked with favour were those who occupied prominent places. When Emile Ollivier had become first minister, she coquetted with him from motives in which physical attraction played the smallest part. Consequently Emile Ollivier was loud in his praises of Madame de Mercy-Argenteau's intelligence.

In her thirst for conquest she overcame the resistance, or hesitation, of those who failed to worship at her feet.

for the man she loved a title which would allow them to live together as Count and Countess de Rigo; finally that singular coincidence which gave to a divorced Princesse de Chimay a name similar to that of Clara Ward's lover, the famous gipsy Rigo, for love of whom the American girl with her extraordinarily showy tastes forsook her husband, the Prince de Caraman-Chimay! What material for collectors of anecdotes!

Another Princesse de Chimay, a very intelligent and distinguished woman, had also a notorious divorce suit. The case she brought against her husband, General and Prince de Bauffremont, filled the press with revelations of a private nature and also some financial scandals.

Count de Stackelberg was one of her most ardent lovers. It was even said he died of grief for her. Many ill-natured rumours were rife as to the sources of her luxury and sumptuous manner of life. Opinions differed, but all had some version to offer on the point. Some said she had unlimited credit at the bank of Oppenheim, whose affections were sooner exhausted than his coffers. Madame de Mercy-Argenteau's name was also mixed up with that of Prince Obreskow, first secretary of the Russian Embassy and reputed son of the Emperor Nicholas I. His mother, who had been dowered and married with much display and generosity, was considered one of the most perfect beauties at the Court of St. Petersburg. The Prince had entered the diplomatic service, but he lacked the qualities essential to this career, namely, discretion and a sharp ear. He was deaf and had no idea of modulating his voice. He was given to crying aloud things that should not even be whispered, especially when talking of women in general, and of Madame de Mercy-Argenteau in particular, of whose sympathy he boasted in public. He probably raised his voice because he could not hear himself, and no doubt believed himself to be speaking in a low tone. Obreskow came to a poor end in Italy, where one of his sisters was married to Count Castellani Aragona in Naples, and the other to Prince Fonti.

The last important Parisian reception at which Madame de Mercy-Argenteau shone was at a fête given by Baron Oppenheim, in the summer of 1869, in honour of the Viceroy of Egypt, who had come to Paris to invite the Empress to the opening of the Suez Canal.

Madame de Mercy-Argenteau was the latest object of admiration with the Emperor. At the end of his reign some sort of a political influence was attributed to her. During his captivity she carried on a correspondence with Napoleon III and presented herself several times at Wilhelmshöhe. Did she hope to fascinate the victor and

LOUISE DE CARAMAN-CHIMAY, COUNTESS DE MERCY-ARGENTEAU,
AT THE TIME OF THE MARRIAGE OF HER DAUGHTER,
THE MARCHIONESS D'AVARAY

soften the fate of the vanquished? She made a spontaneous but unsuccessful effort to obtain from the King of Prussia some alleviation of the sufferings of the French army imprisoned in Germany, and to induce him to grant better terms than the cruel conditions imposed by the war. But the time had gone by when a woman's smile had power to change the course of events. She was not allowed to approach William; and neither her beauty, her impassioned eloquence, nor her dishevelled hair and tearful eyes, could soften the heart of the Iron Chancellor. She carried away from Versailles nothing but bitter disillusionment.

After the fall of the Empire the Countess de Mercy-Argenteau appeared but rarely in Paris. She divided her time between the Argenteau estates[1] in Belgium, Austria, and Russia, where she was the friend of the General and composer Cui, forming here and there, as ever, a select circle of men of the world and artists.

This unsettled existence was suddenly checked by a succession of money difficulties and family troubles. She who in Paris, in her luxurious house in the Rue de l'Elysée,[2] had formerly been surrounded by elegance and luxury, was forced to withdraw into a shabby lodging in St. Petersburg. Here the woman who had tasted all the refinements of life occupied an apartment which re-

[1] In 1886 she was the victim of a carriage accident. She was driving herself one day in an English dog-cart in the vast park of the château, when her horse bolted. She was thrown out upon some rocks and never wholly recovered from the injuries she received.

In spite of her misfortunes, she had managed to preserve the historic Argenteau mansion with its rich collection of old masters. It passed out of the hands of her daughter, the Marquise d'Avaray, who, after her divorce and a series of events with which we have no concern, assumed one of the titles of the illustrious de Mercy-Argenteau family and called herself Princess de Monglion. The fine property is now in the possession of a restaurant-keeper of Liége!

[2] At No. 8, formerly the house of the Duc de Persigny, which had a subterranean passage into the Elysée Palace. She left it finally in 1885 (four years before her death), and the building was sold.

sembled the cell of a recluse, while her sole dress was a gown of black woollen material; as though, to quote Madame Carette's expression, she was anxious to bury herself alive in mourning for her vanished illusions. The close of her life was sad, like that of most of the radiant women of this period. They had their season of triumph brightened by the dazzling sun of prosperity. One short hour sufficed to darken their heaven; then followed the night of chill and disenchantment.

. . . . . .

As the list of these now vanished beauties who claim their rightful places in a feminine memorial of the Second Empire grows in length, other memories crowd in upon us. Questions too arise. Is the extraordinary Marquise de Païva quite forgotten, together with all her startling adventures — Thérèse Lachmann, Marquise de Païva, Countess de Haenkel? We shall come upon her again when we dig down into the lower strata of Paris society.

Then there is the charming Countess de Canizy, whose attractive grace won her the diminutive of "Canizette," a shadowy figure of high life which vanished, leaving behind only a faint trace of perfume. What of the fair-haired Marquise de Galliffet? And her friend, the Princesse de Sagan, and the particular circle of the Prince and Princesse de Sagan, an ardent circle in which we seem to be treading on hot ashes? What of these and the many others we cannot even name to-day?

Something must be left to the future. The Gallery of Women of the Second Empire has been opened. We will not say that it is irrevocably closed.

ALPHABETIC INDEX OF PERSONS MENTIONED IN THIS VOLUME

A

About (Edmond), 127, 134
Adélaïde (Madame), sister of King Louis Philippe, 230
Aguado (Viscount), 87, 184
Aguado (Viscountess), 269
Agut (Madame), 141
Albe (Duchess d'), 140, 260, 261
Albemarle (Lord), 336
Albufera (Duke d'), 253
Alessandro (Countess). See Walewska (Countess), 4, 51
Alexander II, Emperor of Russia, 88, 91
Aligre (Marquis d'), 66
Alton-Shée (d'), 184
Amaury-Duval, 134
Amélie (Queen Marie), 92
Andrassy (Count), 213
Antas (d'), 14
Apponyi (Count), 183
Arago (Alfred), 106, 129
Arago (Etienne), 304
Aragona (Count Castellani), 360
Ardalès (Marquis d'). See Teba (Count of)
Archdeacon, 171
Aremberg (Prince d'), 207
Arese (Count d'), 22
Armide, heroine of Tasso, 68, 161
Arnal (Dr.), 43
Audebrand (Philibert), 204
Aumale (Duke d'), 35, 92, 154
Avaray (Marchioness d'), 361
Avernes (Countess d'), 159
Ayguesvives (Count d'), 138
Azeglio (Marquis Emmanuel d'), 3, 231

B

Bacciochi (Count), 327
Backendorf (Mme. de), 205
Bapst (Germain), 93
Baraguay d'Hilliers (Marshal), 234
Barbedienne, 161
Barbey d'Aurévilly (Jules), 112, 120
Barrail (General du), 281
Bassano (Duchess de), 16, 32, 205
Baudry (Paul), 44, 103
Beauharnais (the), 85
Bauffremont (Prince de), 359
Beaulaincourt (Countess de). See Contades (Marchioness de)
Beaulaincourt-Marles (Count de), 310
Beaumont (Countess de), 212, 253, 323
Beauvau (Princess de), 184
Beguin, artist, 290
Belbœuf (Marchioness de), 111
Bellanger (Marguerite), 206
Benedetti (Count), 72
Bentzon (Thérèse), 314
Berckheim (Baroness de), 341
Berlioz, 184
Bernadotte (General), 144
Bernard (Charles de), 249
Berryer, 68
Bertin (Armand), 157, 161
Bertrand (General), 29
Besson, 215
Béthune (Count Léon de), 327
Beust (Count de), 213
Beyens (Baron de), 185
Bismarck (Prince de), 242, 243, 280, 296, 333, 334, 335
Blanche (Dr.), 238
Blowitz (Opper de), 296
Blumenthal (General de), 336
Bocher (Charles), 315
Bonapartes (the), 67, 85, 86, 144, 166, 167
Bonaparte (Lucien), 64, 67, 144
Bonaparte (Louis), King of Holland, 95, 144, 166, 167, 175

Bonaparte (Julie). See Roccagiovini (Marchioness de).
Bondeville (Mlle. de), 148
Bonneval (Countess Marie de), 205
Boquet (designer), 233
Bougenel (General), 117
Briollet (Hippolyte), 181
Bouilhet (Louis), 128
Brissac (Duchess de), 205
Bourgoing (Baron de), 273
Brofferio, 71, 72
Bronzino, 339
Bruges (Count de), 287, 296
Broglie (Victor, Duke de), 157
Bruges (Mlle. de). See La Rochelambert
Brunow (Baron), 231
Buffet, 297
Bunsen (Baron), 231
Buol-Schauenstein (Count de), 233
Bussière (Alfred Renouard, Baron de), 318, 319

C

Cabanel, 45, 344, 358
Cadore (Duchess de), 240, 269, 345
Camondo (Count de), 131
Candia (Mario di), 15
Canizy (Countess de), 270, 362
Canova, 144
Canrobert (Marshal and Mme.), 93, 205, 253
Carette (Mme.), 28, 189, 215, 280, 320
Caro (Edmé), 42, 129, 311
Carola (Princess), daughter of Prince Wasa, 263
Caroline, Queen of Naples, 329
Carpeaux, 354, 356
Caspigliole, 57
Cassagnac (Paul de), 12
Cassini, 315
Castelar (Emilio), 64
Castellane (Marshal de), 301, 304, 307, 312
Castellane (Count Stanislas de), 316
Castellane (Countess de), 161, 302
Castellane (Sophie de). See Contades (Marchioness de)
Castellani-Aragona (Count), 360
Castiglione (Countess de), 1–63, 78
Castiglione (François, Count de Verasis), 4, 5, 6
Castiglione (Georges de), son of the Count and Countess, 24, 55
Castiglione (Chevalier Clément), 57
Castiglione (Duchess de). See Colonna
Castries (Duchess de), 253
Catherine II., 20
Catherine of Würtemberg, 84
Caux (Marquis de), 191
Cavour, 9, 16, 17, 18, 20, 46, 54, 60, 75, 243, 247, 356
Cavour (Marquis Aynard), 57
Cellamare, 159
Chamfort, 160
Changarnier (General), 253, 283
Chanzy (General), 37
Chaplin, 138, 141
Chaponay (Mme. de), 133
Charles-Quint, 260
Charles X., 286
Charnacé (Marquis Guy de), 204, 206, 287, 294, 297
Charnacé (Marchioness de), 303
Chartres (Duc de), 35, 53, 293
Chateaubriand, 314
Chimay (Prince Alphonse de), 358
Chimay (Clara Ward, Princess de), 358
Chimay (Mlle. Lejeune, for a time Princess Alphonse de), 358
Chimay (Princess de). See Tallien (Mme.)
Chollet (Baron de), 25
Chopin, 359
Christina of Sweden, 216
Cibrario (Count Luigi), 16, 70, 71
Cigala (General), 6, 57
Cigala (Chevalier Henry), 57
Cigala (Countess), 57
Cinq-Mars, 35
Circourt (Countess de), 356
Clermont-Tonnerre (Prince de), 193
Clermont-Tonnerre (Princess de), 269
Cléry (Léon), 58, 59
Clotilde (Princess), 100, 241, 269, 270
Coislin (Marquis de), 305, 308
Colonna (Don Carlo), Duke de Castiglione, 354
Colonna (Anastase). See Walewski
Colonna (Duchess), 206, 338, 351 *et seq.*
Constantin (Grand Duke), 97
Contades (Marquis Henri de), 304
Contades (Sophie de Castellane, Marchioness de), 94, 131, 206, 302 *et seq.*

Coquereau (the *abbé*), 98, 106, 110, 116, 117
Cornély, 54
Corot, 131
Corsi (Luisa), 21, 30, 62
Corsini (Prince), 224
Cowley (Lord and Lady), 212, 307
Cretté (Deputy Mayor), 170
Crispi, 60
Cui (General), 361
Cypris, 211
Czartoryska (Princess), 358

D

Damrémont (Countess de), 8
Danaé, 33
Daudet (Alphonse), 129
David (Félicien), 239
Decamps, 161
Decazes (Duke), 153
Delacroix (Eugène), 74, 131, 355
Demidoff (Nicolas, Count de), 88, 89
Demidoff (Count Anatole, Prince de San Donato), 88, 89, 90, 91, 94, 98, 99
Demorny, 167, 168
Demorny (Auguste). See Morny (Duke de)
Derby (Lord), 231
Desportes (Mlle.), actress, 181
Desprez (Mme.), reader to Princess Mathilde, 110, 116
Diana, 211, 233, 308
Dosne (Mme. de), 158, 172
Dosne (Mlle. Félicité), 228
Douglas (Lady). See Duchess of Hamilton
Drouyn de Lhuys, 246, 307
Drouyn de Lhuys (Countess), 307
Dubois de Lestang (Mme.). See Lestang, 233
Dubufe the elder, 152
Duchâtel (Count and Countess), 158, 321
Ducos, (Mme.), 264
Ducrot (General), 332, 334, 335, 336
Dufour (Mme.), housekeeper to Sainte-Beuve, 125
Dumas (Alexandre), 103, 111, 235
Dumas *fils* (Alexandre), 14, 111, 143
Duperré (Admiral), 340
Dupin (Charles), 331
Depuytren, 355
Duroc (Marshal), 226

E

Eglinton (Lady), 195
Elisabeth, Empress of Austria, 223
Erazzu (Mme.), 184
Erlanger, (Mlle.), 235
Espinasse (Mme.), 127
Essling (Princess d'), 201
Estancelin (General), 19, 23, 35, 36, 53, 54, 59, 161, 172
Eugénie, Empress of the French, 88, 94, 95, 97, 98, 131, 140, 187, 214, 251, 259–85, 290
Evans (Dr.), 215

F

Feder, 71
Feuillet (Octave), 129, 193, 194, 240
Feuillet (Mme. Octave), 222, 235, 338
Fialin. See Persigny
Fieschi, 155
FitzJames (Charles de), 322
Flahaut de la Billarderie (Count), 228
Flammarens (Marquis de), 11
Flaubert (Gustave), 127, 128, 129
Fleury (General), 20, 22, 172, 253, 305, 309
Fleury (Mme.), 233
Fly (Mme. de), 117
Fontenelle, 160
Fonti (Prince), 360
Fortoul (Mme.), 235, 264
Fould (Achille), 16, 110, 245, 248
Franck (Baroness de), 318
Franck (A.), 141
Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria, 216
François de Paule (Don), 263
Fraysseix (Marquis de), 15
Frederick II, 318
Fromentin (Eugène), 103
Frossard (General), 334

G

Gabrielle d'Estrées, 262
Gabrielli (Prince), 107
Galliffet (General, Marquis de), 184, 187, 193, 206–11, 193, 322
Galliffet (Marchioness de), 206, 322, 362

Gambetta, 254
Ganderax (Mme. Louise), 117
Garibaldi, 74
Gardonne (M. de), 214
Gautier (Théophile), 103, 108, 117, 118, 119, 142, 235
Gérôme, 45, 210
Girardin (Emile de), 126, 142
Girardin (Mme. Emile de), 206
Giraud (Eugène), 38, 101, 103, 105, 106, 107, 114, 115, 127, 135, 136
Giraud (Victor), 100, 107, 114
Gleaser, 126
Goethe, 219
Golowskine (Countess de), 296
Goltz (Count de), 238, 247
Goncourt (Edmond and Jules de), 103, 106, 113, 123, 128, 129, 134, 136, 141, 142, 315
Gonzalès de Cordoue, 260
Got (Edouard), 218
Gounod, 185, 232, 235
Gouy (Countess de), 111
Goya, 44
Grammont (Duke de). See Guiches
Grammont-Caderousse, 184
Grévy (Jules), 256
Griscelli, 20, 21, 22, 150
Guiches (Duke de), later Duke de Grammont, 229
Guizot, 157, 230
Guzman (Alphonse Perez de), 260
Guzman (Eugénie de). See Empress Eugénie

H

Haenkel, (Countess de), 362
Hamel, 88
Hamelin (Admiral and Mme.), 38
Hamilton, the 17th century writer, 320
Hamilton (Lady Douglas, Duchess of), 94, 95, 212
Hanotaux (Gabriel), 15, 62, 340
Haussmann (Valentine), 240, 344
Hatzfeld (Countess de), 302, 315
Hébert, 103, 107
Hébrard (Adrien), 127
Henri IV, 262
Hertford (Lord), 33
Hervé, 185
Hobersart (d'), 161
Hohenzollern, 131
Hortense (Queen), 10, 84, 85, 86, 87, 144, 163 *et seq.*
Houssaye (Arsène), 152
Howard (Miss), 93, 95, 306
Hübner (Baron de), 190, 234
Hugo (Victor), 68, 74
Humbert, King of Italy, 6

I

Ibrahim, son of Ibrahim Pacha, 283
Ideville (Henri d'), 24, 25, 26, 69, 71, 73, 74
Ingres, 321
Inverness (Duchess of), 4
Iphigenia, 4
Isabella II, Queen of Spain, 263
Ismaïl Pacha, 316
Istria (Duchess of), 299

J

Jacquemart (Mlle.), 290
Janin (Jules), 204
Janvier de la Motte, 293
Janvier de la Motte (Mme.), 152, 156, 173
Janzé (Viscountess), 206
Jarnac (Count de), 173
Jeaurat, 233
Jérôme Napoléon, King of Westphalia, 85, 87, 92, 97
Jérôme Napoleon (Prince). See Napoleon
Joinville (Prince de), 154
Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain, 144
Julie Bonaparte (Princess). See Roccagiovini (Marchioness)

K

Karr (Alphonse), 80
Kirkpatrick. See Montijo
Kisselef, 161
Korsakof (Mme. de), 14

L

La Bédoyère (Marchioness de), Princess de la Moskowa, 29, 237, 269, 290, 359
Laborde (Count Léon de), 110
Lachmann (Thérèse), 362
Laczinska (Marie). See Walewska
Laffitte (Jules), 34, 158
Lagrange (Frédéric de), 299

La Gravière (Admiral Jurien de), 214
Lamballe (Princess de), 189
Lamberty, 184
Lamporecchi, 57
Lamporecchi (Chev. Alexander and John), 57
Lamy, shoemaker, 170
Lano (Pierre de), 252, 324
La Poëze (Countess de), 269, 286, 289, 341
La Rocca (General), 57
La Rocca (Countess), 57
La Rochelambert (Marquis de), 286
La Tour d'Auvergne (Prince de), 24, 247
La Tour-Maubourg (Countess), 269
Lau (Count de), 208
La Valette (Marchioness de), 228
La Villa (Countess de), 57
Lavisse (E.), 311
Lebreton (Mme.), 214
Le Breton, 312, 315
Lebrun (General), Duke de Plaisance, 175
Le Hon (Count Charles Joseph), 151
Le Hon (Countess), 86, 147–176, 240, 338
Le Hon (Count Léopold), 174
Lejeune (Mlle.), 358
Lemoinne (John), 161
Léonard, 244
Léopold I., King of the Belgians, 151
Le Pic (Viscountess), 205
Lépine, 150
Leroy, hairdresser to the Court, 244
Lesseps (Ferdinand de), 261, 316
Leusse (Count and Countess de), 337
Leve (Antonio de), 260
Lezay-Marnésia (Countess), 269
Liadières (Mme. de), 158
Litta (Duchess), 57, 212
Liszt, 359
Lobau (Marshal), 187
Loliée (Frédéric), 138
Louis XIII, 35
Louis XIV, 187, 315, 319
Louis XV, 15, 193, 314
Louis XVIII, 119
Louis Napoleon, King of Holland. See Bonaparte (Louis).
Louis-Philippe, 92, 159
Loulé (Marchioness de), 159
Lourmel (Countess de), 206
Loys-Chandieu (Marchioness de), 341
Luçay (Count de), 104
Lucien Bonaparte (Prince), 71, 144

M

Machiavel, 223
Mac-Mahon (Mme. de), 253
Magnan (Marshal), 307, 344
Maine (Duchess de), 218
Malaret (Baroness de), 9, 269
Malakoff (Sophia de la Paniéga, Duchess de Malakoff), 346–351
Malakoff (Louise de), 346, 351
Malmesbury (Lord), 231
Manch (tailor), 170
Manteuffel (General de), 296
Marcelin, 197
Marcello. See Colonna (Duchess).
Marguerite, Queen of Italy, 6
Maria (Dona), Queen of Portugal, 95
Marie-Amélie, Queen of France, 92
Marie Antoinette, 233
Marie Christine, Infanta of Spain, 263
Mario. See Candia.
Mars (Mlle.), 289
Marivaux, 320
Massa (Marquis Philip de), 184, 196 *et seq.*, 329
Massé (artist), 262
Massimino (Countess), 57
Masson (Frédéric), 227
Mathilde (Princess), 8, 38, 83–146, 166, 223, 233, 235, 247, 258, 306, 323, 339
Maupas (Count de), 67, 171
Méhémed Ali, 316
Méhémet Djamil Bey, 234
Meissonier, 67, 161
Mercy-Argenteau (Countess de), 358, 359, 360
Mérimée, 103, 119, 120, 129, 133, 180, 190, 235
Méry (Jules), 129
Metternich (Chancellor, Prince de), 182
Metternich (Prince Richard de), 183, 199, 213, 241, 277, 281
Metternich-Sandor (Princess de), 40, 131, 177–221, 239, 288, 321, 328, 330, 341
Meyendorf (Baroness de), 41, 340
Mézières (Alfred), 101, 334
Mignerot (Mlle.), 140
Mignet, 356

Millevoye, 119
Mirbel (Mme. de), 66
Mocquart, 19, 195, 236
Moissenet, 140
Molière, 187, 326
Moltke (Countess de), née Zeeback, 148
Monk, 253
Montaigne (Michel de), 124
Montebello (General de), 253
Montebello (Duchess de), 240, 334
Montesquiou (Robert de), 340
Monglion (Princess de). See d'Avaray
Montguyon (M. de), 161
Montijo (Countess de), 261, 264, 347
Montijo (Mlle. de), 261, 264
Montmorency (Duchess de), 344
Montorgueil (Georges), 62
Montrond (M. de), 160
Moreau the Younger, 233
Morny (Duke de), 7, 8, 45, 101, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 158, 167, 169, 170, 171, 172, 176, 196, 245, 257, 271
Morny (Duchess de), 345
Moskowa (Princess de la). See La Bédoyère (Marchioness de)
Mosselman, 151, 168
Mouchy (Duke de), Duc de Poix, 329
Mouchy (Duchess de), 189, 233, 240, 344
Murat (General), King of Naples, 182
Murat (Princess Anna). See Mouchy (Duchess de)

N

Napoleon I, 74, 84, 92, 182, 224, 227
Napoleon III, viii, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39, 40, 51, 54, 60, 62, 67, 68, 85, 87, 88, 93, 94, 95, 96, 99, 103, 145, 150, 164, 166, 169, 176, 230, 232, 261 *et seq.*, 336, 360
Napoleon (Prince Jérôme), 39, 99, 110, 120, 126, 127, 248, 283, 306.
Napoleon IV, 283, 284
Necker (M. and Mme.), 314
Necker (Germaine), 314
Nefftzer, 127
Nemours (Duke de), 151
Ney (Edgar), Prince de la Moskowa, 289, 305
Nicchia. See Castiglione (Countess de)
Nicholas I, Emperor of Russia, 88, 91
Niel (Marshal), 334
Nieuwerkerke (Count of), 40, 41, 91, 103, 106, 108, 132, 138, 139, 140
Nigra (Chevalier), 214, 215, 281
Noriac (Jules), 179

O

Obreskow (Prince d'), 360
Offenbach (Jacques), 185
Oldoïni (Virginie). See Castiglione (Countess de)
Oldoïni (Marquis and Marchioness), 2, 3, 39
Oliphant, 296
Ollivier (Emile), 169, 312, 359
Oppenheim (Baron), 360
Oppert (Jules), 81, 267
Orlandini, 223
Orléans (Princes of), 60, 92, 255
Orléans (Philippe Duc d'), 153, 154, 155
Orléans (Princess Marie d'), 154, 159
Oscar II, King of Sweden, 144
Orzegowska (Countess de), 324
Ottenfels (Baroness d'), 352

P

Pacca. See Duchess d'Albe
Padua (Duchess de), 95
Pagerie (Countess Stéphanie de la), 15, 16, 251, 347
Païva (Marchioness de), 362
Palmerston (Lord and Lady), 231
Paniéga (Sophia de la). See Malakoff
Paterson, 116
Paule (La belle), 12
Pélagie, servant of the Goncourts, 113
Pélissier (Duke de Malakoff, marshal), 347 *et seq.*
Pélissier (Madame). See Sophia Paniéga (Duchess de Malakoff)
Perponcher (Count de), 299
Perronneau, 131
Perrot (Adèle). See Janvier de la Motte (Madame)
Persigny (Fialin, Duke de), 164, 192, 236, 245, 257, 361
Persigny (Duchess de), 191, 240
Philippe d'Orléans, called Philippe Egalité, 159

Phillips (Dr.), 127
Piccolelli (Marchioness), 268
Pius IX, 18, 60
Pierres (Baron de), 138, 307
Pierres (Mme. de), 206, 307
Pietri (Francesco), 22, 146
Pinard (E.), 48
Plaisance (Duke and Duchess de), 175, 176
Poilly (Baron de), 91
Poix (Duke de). See Mouchy
Pomeyrac (Mme. de), 344
Pommereu (Count Alexis de), 66
Pompadour (Marchioness de), 262
Pongerville (de), 119
Poniatowski (Prince Joseph), 225
Poniatowska (Princess Louise), 86, 152, 233
Ponsard (François), 68
Ponson du Terrail, 54
Ponte-Corvo (Prince de), 329
Popelin (Claudius), 117
Poppœa, 143
Potocka (Countess), 32
Pourtalès (Mélanie de Bussière, Countess de), 182, 184, 199, 240, 317–342
Pourtalès (Edmond, Count de), 318, 322
Pouyer-Quertier, 292–297, 299
Pozzo di Borgo (Duchess), 356
Praët (Van), 157, 173
Prévost (Marcel), 197
Primoli (Count and Countess), 129

R

Rachel, 229
Rapallina, 57
Raphaël, 74, 138
Rattazzi (Urbain), 65, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77
Rattazzi (Mme. Urbain). See Mme. de Rute
Reculot (Mme. de), 206
Regnault, 354, 356
Regnier (Henri de), 2
Regulus, 159
Reichstadt (Duke de), 85, 231
Rembrandt, 339
Renan (Ernest), 120, 127, 130, 138
Reuss (Prince de), 193, 268
Reynolds, 131
Rianzarès (Duke de), 263
Ricasoli (Baron), 76
Ricci (Marquis and Marchioness de), 76, 223
Richebourg (Emile), 54
Richelieu (Cardinal, Duke de), 35
Rigo (Count and Countess de), 359
Rigo (the gipsy), 359
Robin (Charles), 127
Roccagiovini (Marchioness), Princess Julie Bonaparte, 120, 121
Romain (Yvonne de), 352
Roqueplan (Camille), 153
Roqueplan (Nestor), 153
Rothschild (Alphonse de), 35, 59, 184, 295
Rothschild (Nathaniel de), 217.
Rothschild (Laure de), 328
Rouher, 150, 288
Rouher (Mme.), 288
Rouland, 195
Rowles (Emmy), 95
Rurik, 149
Rute (Louis de), 78
Rute (Mme. de), 64–82

S

Sabatier d'Espeyran (Mme.), 171
Sagan (Prince Boson de), 198, 200, 322
Sagan (Princess de), 184, 362
Saint-Amant (S. de), 53
Saint-Arnaud (Marshal de), 171, 307
Saint-Leu (Count de). See Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland
Saint-Marc Girardin, 153
Saint-Marsault (Mme. de), 117
Saint-Hilaire (Barthélemy de), 356
Saint-Simon (Duke de), 3
Saint-Vallier (Count de), 296
Sainte-Beuve, 98, 103, 117, 120, 121, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130, 133, 135, 267, 311.
Salammbô, 14
Saltabadil, 20
Sampaye (Count de), 160
San-Donato (Prince de). See Demidoff
San-Juliano (Marquis de), 224
Sancy-Parabère (Countess de), 205, 274
Sand (George), 74, 112
Sandeau (Jules), 235
Sandor (Count), 178
Santa-Cruz (Marquis de), 260
Sapinaud (Mme. de), 206
Sardou (Victorien), 103, 104, 181, 182
Sauzet, 117

Saxe-Coburg (Duke Ernest of), 11
Scheffer (Ary), 103
Schérer (Edmond), 127
Schickler (Baroness), 210
Schiller, 219
Schleinitz (Baron de), 332, 334
Scholl (Aurélien), 181, 203, 298
Schomberg (Count de), 224
Schwartzenberg (Princess de), 216
Serbay (Mme. de), 117
Shode, 282
Simetana, 218
Solms (Count Frédéric de), 66, 185
Solms (Countess de). See Rute (Mme. de)
Sonnenthal, 218
Soubeyran (Baron de), 295
Soulié (Eudore), 104, 108
Soulié (Fédéric), 124, 137
Spiegel (Baron Edgar de), 217, 220
Spinola (Marquis and Marchioness de), 57
Stackelberg (Count de), 360
Staël (Mme. de), 82, 314, 323
Stendhal (Henri-Beyle), 260
Stéphanie (Countess). See Pagerie (La)
Stevens (Alfred), 114
Stoffel (Lieut.-Colonel), 334
Strauss, 11
Strozzi (Prince), of the House of Modena, 87
Sue (Eugène), 69

T

Taine (Hippolyte), 127, 144
Tallemant des Réaux, 108
Talleyrand, 160, 314
Tallien (Mme., Princess de Chimay), 358
Talma, 222
Taschard, 253
Tascher de la Pagerie (Duke), 16
Tascher de la Pagerie (Mme.), 15
Tasse (le), 61
Téba (Cypriano, Count de), 260
Téba (Maria Manuela de Kirkpatrick, Countess de). See Montijo
Tencin (Mme. de), 125
Tennyre, 161
Thayer (Mme. Hortense de), 29
Thiers, 48, 60, 74, 153, 157, 228, 255, 283, 292, 293, 338, 351, 356, 357
Thomson (M. and Mme.), 211
Thou (de), 35
Thouvenel (Edouard), 8, 157, 234 237, 245, 249
Thouvenel (Louis), 246
Titien, 74
Toulonjeon (M. de), 306
Tribone (Mario), 46, 61
Troubat (Jules), 120, 125, 128
Troubetzkoï (Princess Lise), 212, 235
Troubetzkoï, Duchess de Morny (Princess Sophie), 148, 149
Turenne (Louis de), 322
Türr (General), 71

V

Vaillant (Marshal), 249
Valençay (Duchess de). See Hatzfeld (Mme. de)
Valombrosa (Duke and Duchess de), 57
Valon (Count Léon de), 291, 293, 298
Valon (Countess de), 291 *et seq.*
Van Dyck, 131, 339
Van Praët, 157, 173
Vatismesnil (Count de), 293
Vatout, 152, 158, 159
Vatry, 159
Venus, 44
Verasis. See Castiglione
Veronese, 44
Veyne (Dr.), 127, 128
Victor Emmanuel, 6, 7, 8, 18, 19, 54, 60, 76
Victoria, Queen of England, 223, 279
Viel-Castel (Horace de), 36, 98, 109, 112, 115, 140, 141, 204, 261
Viel-Castel (Louis de), 261
Villamerina (Marchioness de), 212
Vimercati (Countess Ninette). See Louis Ganderax
Viollet-le-Duc, 119
Vivien (Capt.), 91
Voisin, 59
Voiture, 159
Voltaire, 218

W

Wagner (Richard), 183, 184, 218
Walewska (Marie, Anna de Ricci, Countess), 3, 10, 15, 51, 76, 94, 184, 211, 222–258, 264, 265, 338, 345, 347, 348, 349

Walewska (Marie—neé Laczinska), 225 *et seq.*
Walewski (Anastase Colonna de Walewice), 225
Walewski (Alexandre Florian Joseph Colonna, Count), 3, 10, 158, 222, 224 *et seq.*
Ward (Clara). See Princess de Chimay
Wasa (Prince), 263
Watteau, 191
Weimar (Grand Duke Alexander de), 219
Wilbrandt (Adolphe), 218
Winterhalter, 153, 182
William I, 243, 244, 332, 361
Wodzicka (Countess Sophie), 32
Worth, 180, 181
Wyse (Thomas), 65

Z

Zamoïska (Princess). See Louise de Malakoff
Zambo, 21
Zeller (Jules), 117

SECOND EDITION OF

WOMEN OF THE SECOND EMPIRE

CHRONICLES OF THE COURT OF NAPOLEON III

By FRÉDÉRIC LOLIÉE

Translated by ALICE IVIMY

With an Introduction by RICHARD WHITEING
and 51 Portraits, 3 in Photogravure. Demy 8vo, 21s. net.

PRESS OPINIONS

Daily Telegraph.—"A really fascinating story. Mr. Richard Whiteing contributes an illuminating introduction. . . . Here are anecdotes innumerable of the brilliant women of the Second Empire, so that in reading the book we are not only dazzled by the beauty and gorgeousness of everything, but we are entertained by the record of things said and done, and through all we are conscious of the coming gloom and doom so soon to overtake the Court. Few novels possess the fascination of this spirited work."

Standard.—"Mr. Frédéric Loliée has written a remarkable book, vivid and pitiless in its description of the intrigue and dare-devil spirit that flourished unchecked at the French Court."

Daily News.—"Few Courts have been so splendid, so frivolous, so varied . . . the characters are presented in a clear and life-like manner . . . the chapters for all their light-hearted gaiety have about them the poignant interest of a great tragedy."

Sunday Times.—"A delicious banquet of scandal, contributions to which have been secured by the artful device of persuading ladies not so much to make their own confessions as to talk about their friends. . . . The illustrations present us with a veritable galaxy of feminine beauty."

Literary World.—"The result . . . as Mr. Whiteing suggests in his noteworthy introduction . . . is a record of actual life far more absorbing in its interest than most novels."

Mr. JAMES DOUGLAS in the *Star.*—"At a moment when most novels send you to sleep, let me whisper the name of a book which will amuse you in most melancholy mood. One of the freshest, gayest, and wittiest volumes of gossip and anecdote I have ever read."

Pall Mall Gazette.—"Some were celebrated for beauty, and others for boldness; well worth reading, for M. Loliée is a bright and witty biographer."

Daily Mail.—"A very entertaining book . . . full of courtly indiscretions and comic stories."

Morning Post.—"It would be hard to find a novel or a romance more interesting to read than M. Loliée's volume. Not a page of it can be skipped. . . . Miss Alice M. Ivimy's translation of the French version reads as if the book had been originally written in English, and that is a compliment which nowadays can very rarely be paid."

Yorkshire Post.—"The book is fascinating in its strong humanity, and very beautiful figures of that brilliant period of history flit before the gaze of the prosaic reader of the twentieth century."

NAPOLEONIC LITERATURE

NAPOLEON'S THREATENED INVASIONS OF ENGLAND. By HAROLD F. B. WHEELER and A. M. BROADLEY, Author of "Three Dorset Captains at Trafalgar," etc. With 108 Illustrations (8 in Colour). 2 vols.

NAPOLEON'S CONQUEST OF PRUSSIA, 1806. By F. LORAINE PETRE, Author of "Napoleon's Campaign in Poland, 1806–7." With an Introduction by FIELD-MARSHAL EARL ROBERTS, K.G., V.C., etc. With numerous Maps, Battle Plans, Portraits, and other Illustrations. Demy 8vo. 12s. 6d. net

THE FALL OF NAPOLEON. By OSCAR BROWNING, Author of "The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon." With numerous Illustrations. Demy 8vo. 12s. 6d. net

NAPOLEON'S CAMPAIGN IN POLAND, 1806–1807. By F. LORAINE PETRE, Author of "Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia." Numerous Illustrations, including Maps and Plans, etc. Demy 8vo. 12s. 6d. net

MEMOIRS OF THE COUNT DE CARTRIE. A Record of the Extraordinary Events in the Life of a French Royalist during the War in La Vendée, and of his Flight to Southampton, where he followed the Humble Occupation of Gardener. With an Introduction by FRÉDÉRIC MASSON, Appendices and Notes by PIERRE AMÉDÉE PICHOT and other Hands, and numerous Illustrations, including a Photogravure Portrait of the Author. Demy 8vo. 16s. net

Tribune.—"Mr. John Lane is to be heartily congratulated upon a literary find as remarkable as it is historically valuable. . . . A remarkable narrative."

Westminster Gazette.—"In this remarkable volume we have a double romance. . . . As a contribution to the history of that momentous crisis, the present volume is of great value, and it has been set before us with all the wealth of detail which the researches of MM. Masson and Pichot, aided by other historians and scholars, have been able to furnish."

Daily Graphic.—"Mr. Lane has made a discovery of no less value than interest. The work . . . throws fresh light upon a period of French history which, so far as the general reader is concerned, has been allowed to remain obscure."

Vanity Fair.—"Thoroughly interesting. . . . The history of the romantic contest is closely followed, and provides a most attractive theme."

World.—"The book is very entertaining, and will be read with pleasure by all who delight in the byways of history."

NAPOLEONIC LITERATURE

THE DUKE OF REICHSTADT (NAPOLEON II).

A Biography compiled from New Sources of Information, by EDWARD DE WERTHEIMER. With numerous Illustrations, two Photogravure Portraits, and a Facsimile Letter. Demy 8vo. 21s. net. Second Edition

Athenæum.—"Exhibits throughout careful and scholarly research into a subject which has not before been treated upon adequate documentary evidence. . . . Is enriched by copious quotations from original authorities in the foot-notes, a fact which greatly enhances its value for students of the period. . . . The present edition gains artistically by the inclusion of reproductions of works of art."

Pall Mall Gazette.—"The importance of the work is not fully indicated by its title. It is far more than a biography of the Emperor's son, for we have a most incisive and convincing portrait of Marie Louise and a clear exposition of the delicate relations between France and the rest of Europe during the short period for which the Duke of Reichstadt's name expressed such unknown but formidable possibilities."

Academy.—"M. de Wertheimer has been at great pains to gather every detail concerning his hero, and in addition to searching the State archives and others in Vienna and Berlin, he has been greatly helped by certain private persons descended from those who surrounded the young Napoleon during his boyhood and youth. Of pathetic interest are the many portraits he has also been able to procure and publish, and from these we can gather a very vivid impression of Reichstadt's appearance from babyhood to manhood."

THE BOYHOOD AND YOUTH OF NAPOLEON.

Some Chapters on the Boyhood and Youth of Bonaparte, 1769–1793, by OSCAR BROWNING. With Portraits. Crown 8vo. 5s.

Evening Standard.—"A valuable survey of Napoleon's life from his birth at Ajaccio in 1769 to his services at the Siege of Toulon in 1793. . . . We have not read anywhere a more interesting, a more detailed account of the childhood, schooldays, and early dramatic episodes in the life of this obscure Corsican youth who was destined to alter the map of Europe."

World.—"The story of Napoleon's childhood could not have had an abler or more sympathetic narrator than the author of this very fascinating work, which is to be welcomed as an extremely valuable contribution to the study of a superlatively great historic figure."

NEW ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

MEMOIRS OF LADY FANSHAWE. Written by Herself. With Extracts from the Correspondence of Sir Richard Fanshawe. Edited by H. C. FANSHAWE. With 38 Full-page Illustrations, including four in Photogravure and one in Colour. 8vo. 16s. net

**** *This Edition has been printed direct from the original manuscript in the possession of the Fanshawe Family, and Mr. H. C. Fanshawe contributes numerous notes which form a running commentary on the text. Many famous pictures are reproduced, including paintings by Velasquez and Van Dyck.*

RALPH HEATHCOTE. Letters of a Diplomatist During the Time of Napoleon, Giving an Account of the Dispute between the Emperor and the Elector of Hesse. By COUNTESS GÜNTHER GRÖBEN. With numerous Illustrations. Demy 8vo. 12s. 6d. net

**** *Ralph Heathcote, the son of an English father and an Alsatian mother, was for some time in the English diplomatic service as first secretary to Mr. Brook Taylor, minister at the Court of Hesse, and on one occasion found himself very near to making history. Napoleon became persuaded that Taylor was implicated in a plot to procure his assassination, and insisted on his dismissal from the Hessian Court. As Taylor refused to be dismissed, the incident at one time seemed likely to result to the Elector in the loss of his throne. Heathcote came into contact with a number of notable people, including the Miss Berrys, with whom he assures his mother he is not in love. On the whole, there is much interesting material for lovers of old letters and journals.*

LIFE OF LORD CHESTERFIELD: An Account of the Ancestry, Personal Character, and Public Services of the Fourth Earl of Chesterfield. By W. H. CRAIG, M.A. With numerous Illustrations and Photogravure Portrait. Demy 8vo. 12s. 6d. net

A QUEEN OF INDISCRETIONS. The Tragedy of Caroline of Brunswick, Queen of England. By G. P. CLERICI. Translated from the Italian by FREDERIC CHAPMAN, with an Introduction by the Translator and numerous Illustrations reproduced from contemporary Portraits and Prints. Demy 8vo. 21s. net

Times.—"The book has two great merits, really new material and a seriously historical mind . . . Signor Clerici has himself brought to his task immense pains, lucidity, and an impartial mind which does not prevent a definite view from emerging."

Westminster Gazette.—"The volume, scholarly and well informed . . . forms one long and absorbingly interesting chapter of the *chronique scandaleuse* of Court life . . . It reads like a romance, except that no romancer would care or dare to pack his pages so closely with startling events and fantastic scenes."

BRITISH MALAYA: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya. By Sir FRANK ATHELSTANE SWETTENHAM, K.C.M.G., late Governor of the Straits Colony and High Commissioner for the Federated Malay States, and Author of "Malay Sketches," "The Real Malay," and "Unaddressed Letters." With numerous Illustrations and a Map. Demy 8vo. 16s. net. Second Edition

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD, VIGO STREET, W.
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY, 67 FIFTH AVENUE